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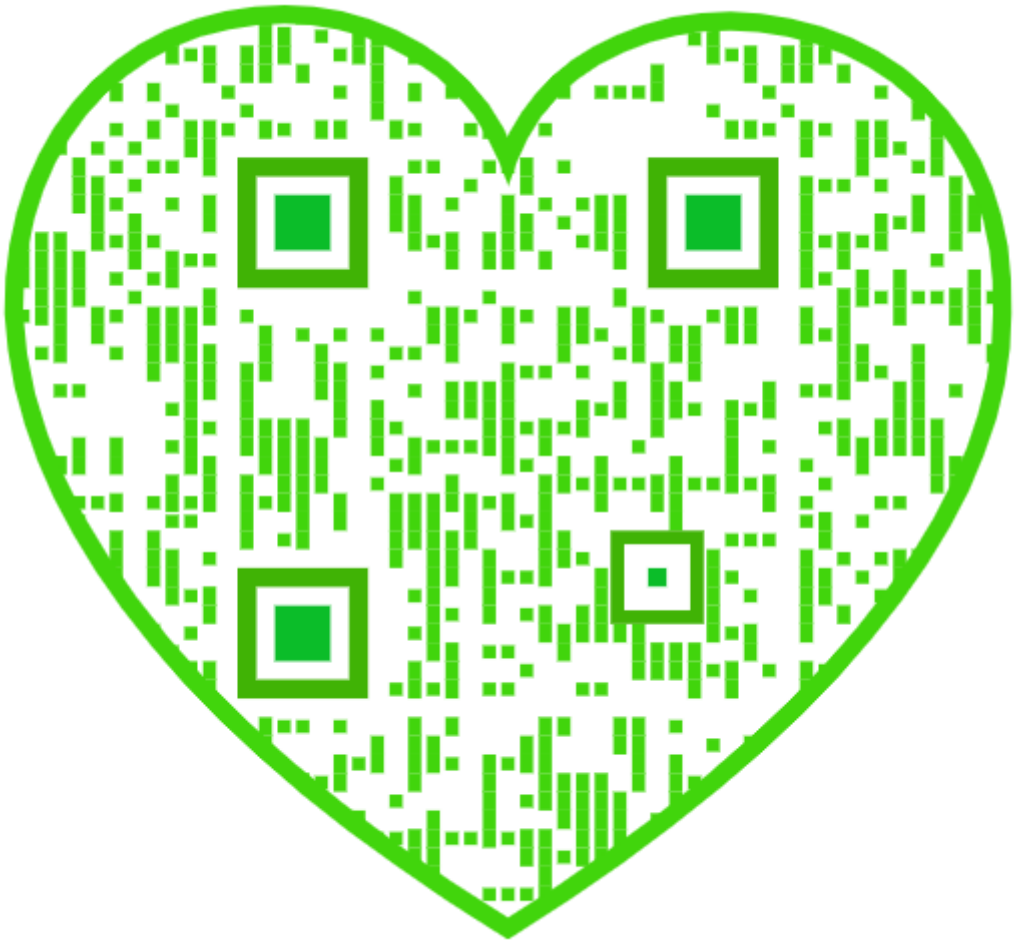
LUTHER PRIMER

Albert T W Steinhaeuser



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MARTIN LUTHER (by Cranach, 1529)

LUTHER PRIMER

A Little Book of Goodly Excerpts
from the Writings of
Martin Luther

by
Albert T. W. Steinhaeuser

Columbia, S. C.
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BEATO PATRI
MATRIQUE BEANTI

Preface

This little book was originally undertaken at the request of the Luther League of the Allentown (Pa.) District and planned as a study-book for its members during the quater-centenary of the Protestant Reformation. It insisted, however, on growing under the hands of the compiler to greater proportions than at first intended, and seemed to clamor to be permitted to seek a wider circle of readers.

It is herewith presented to the general public as a little contribution to the literature of the jubilee year, during which, amid the din of voices telling about Luther and his work, it would modestly crave a hearing for the man himself. It would rejoice greatly if it found itself handled and used in study-classes of whatever sort, or felt itself slipped into the pocket of this or that gentle reader, to be taken out and dipped into during moments of leisure, at home or on the train or out in the open. And it would like certain of its pages to be liked by the children.

It feels very small and unworthy—"a slight thing if thou regard its bulk"—and is sadly aware that it has caught up but a few crumbs from a great man's table; but what it has is the authentic Luther and presents him perhaps from every important angle.

The compiler gratefully acknowledges many a valuable suggestion received from a little German fore-runner—Dr. W. Schrank's *Lutherbuch* (Leipzig: 1913). Fully one-half of the translations are his own, and the remainder he has altered in many places, perhaps not always with happy result. His purpose was to give as free a rendering as possible without doing unnecessary violence to the original.

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I

Two Modest Prefaces

[As we may well imagine, there was a great demand on the part of publishers and readers for a complete edition of Luther's works, which finally amounted in all to over 400. For a long time he was unwilling to give way to this demand, but finally submitted as gracefully as possible, and prepared two very modest prefaces—one for the collected German Works, which began to appear in 1539, and one for the Latin Works, the first volume of which came out in 1545. Extracts from these two prefaces follow, here.]

---

(1) I should have been glad to see all my books forgotten and destroyed. For I perceive what benefit it has brought to the churches that men have begun to collect many books and great libraries alongside the Holy Scriptures, and to bring together, helter-skelter, all sorts of "Fathers," "Councils" and "Doctors." Not only has good time been wasted and the study of the Scriptures neglected, but the pure understanding of the Word of God has been lost, until the Bible has come at last to lie forgotten under the bench.

It was our intention and hope, when we set out to put the Bible into German [see chapters x-xii], that there should now be less writing, and more studying and reading of the Scriptures. For all other writings should point to the Scriptures, as John Baptist pointed to Christ and said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Thus

every one may drink for himself at the fresh spring, as all the Fathers have had to do whenever they desired to produce anything worth while.

Since, however, I cannot prevent it and men are now bent on collecting and printing my books, much against my will, I shall have to let them put their energy and labor on the venture. I comfort myself with the thought that my books will yet lie forgotten in the dust, especially when by God's grace I have written anything good. "I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:4).

Well then, let it go in God's name. I only ask in all kindness that whoever desires at this time to have my books will by no means let them become a hindrance to his own study of the Scriptures, but read them as I read the decretals of the pope and the books of the sophists.† I look into them now and then to see what they have done, or to learn the history and thought of the time, but I do not study them nor feel myself bound to follow them. In the same way I treat the Fathers and the Councils. In this I follow the example of St. Augustine‡ who is one of the first, and almost the only one of them, to subject himself to the Holy Scriptures, uninfluenced by any Fathers or Saints. [1539]

(2) Above all things I beseech the Christian reader, and beg him for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ,

†By sophists he means the theologians.

‡The greatest of the Church Fathers; bishop of Hippo, in Africa; died 430.

to read my earlier writings with great caution and with much pity, remembering that I too was once a monk, and one of the right raving and frantic papists. When I took up the cudgels against indulgences [see chap. iii], I was so full and drunken, yea so besotted, with papal doctrine that in my great zeal I would have been ready to do murder, or at least glad to see and help that murder should be done, on all who refused obedience and submission to the pope, even to his smallest word.

Such a Saul was I at that time, and meant it right earnestly; and there are still many such to-day. I verily espoused this cause in deepest earnest and with all fidelity, the more because I shrank from the Last Day with great fear and trembling, and yet longed from the bottom of my heart to be saved.

Therefore, dear Christian reader, thou wilt note in my earlier books and writings many points of faith which I then humbly yielded and conceded to the pope, but which I have since come to recognize and condemn as the most horrible blasphemies and abominations, and which I would have to be recognized and condemned as such for ever: Amen.

Thou wilt therefore ascribe this my error, or as my opponents venomously term it, this my inconsistency, to the circumstances of the time and to my own ignorance and inexperience. At the outset I was quite alone and without any helpers, and to tell the truth, unskilled in such things, and far too unlearned to discuss such high and weighty matters. For it was

without any intention, purpose or will of my own that I fell, quite unexpectedly, into this wrangling and contention. This I take God, the Searcher of hearts, to witness.

Farewell, dear reader, in the Lord. Pray that the Word may be further spread abroad and may prevail against the devil. For he is mighty and wicked, and is even now raving and raging cruelly, as one who well knows that his time is short, and that the kingdom of his vicar, the Roman Antichrist, is sore beset. But may the God of all grace and mercy strengthen and perfect the work He has begun in us, to His glory and the comfort of His little flock: Amen. [1545]

II

A Letter to a Monk

(April 8, 1516)

[This is one of the earliest of the over 3,000 extant letters of Luther, and shows how firm a grasp he had thus early on the cardinal truth of the Gospel he was to preach and teach all his life long—justification by faith. It also shows the influence upon him of the German mystics, one of whose finest products—*The German Theology*—he published in the same year. The recipient of the letter was George Spenlein, an Augustinian brother, who had been at Wittenberg in 1512, and was now living in Memmingen; later on he became evangelical pastor at Arnstadt in Thuringia.]

Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearest Brother George: I should like to know how it is with thy soul, and whether it has at last learned to despise its own righteousness and to seek comfort and joy in that of Christ. For at present the temptation to rest in one's own works is very strong, especially with those who strive with all their might to become righteous. They are ignorant of God's righteousness, which has been so richly bestowed on us in Christ, without money and without price; they try to do good of themselves, until they imagine they can appear before God adorned with all virtues and merits. But this they can never do. When thou wast with me thou wast thyself of this opinion, or rather de-

lusion, and so was I, who even yet have not completely conquered it, though I fight against it daily.

Therefore, my sweet brother, learn Christ and Him crucified. Praise and laud His holy name, and despising thyself say to Him: "Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin; Thou hast assumed what is mine, and given me what is Thine; Thou hast taken on Thee what Thou wast not, and hast given me what I was not." Beware of aiming at a purity which rebels at being classed with sinners. For Christ dwells only among sinners. For this cause He came down from Heaven, where He dwelt among the righteous, so that He might sojourn also with the sinful. Consider that love of His, and thou wilt experience His sweet consolation. For if by our own efforts we are to obtain peace of conscience, why then did Christ die? Thou wilt therefore find peace nowhere but in Him, when thou most completely despairest of self and thine own works. He Himself will teach thee how in receiving thee He makes thy sins His and His righteousness thine.

If thou firmly believest this (and he is damned that does not believe), then do thou, too, bear patiently with thine erring brethren, making their sins thine own, and letting whatever goodness thou hast become theirs. For thus the Apostle teacheth: "Receive one another, even as Christ received you, to the glory of God" [Rom. 15:7]; and again: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, humbled himself," etc. [Phil. 2:5 ff.]

Do thou the same; and if thou appear to be better than others, do not think it "robbery," as though it belonged to thee alone, but humble thyself, forget what thou art, and become as one of them, that thou mayest bear with them.

For that is a sorry saint, who will not bear patiently with those that are beneath him, but thinks only to run away and be by himself. That would be to bury the Lord's talent and not give one's fellow-servants their due. He ought rather to stay with them, and by patience, prayer, and a good example exercise a salutary influence over them.

Therefore, if thou art a lily or a rose of Christ, know that thy place must needs be among thorns. Only see that through impatience, hasty judgments, or secret pride, thou dost not thyself become a thorn. Christ's kingdom, says the Psalmist, is in the midst of enemies [Ps. 110:2]. Why, then, feign to be surrounded only by faithful friends? If He had desired to live only among the good or to die only for His friends, for whom would He have been able to die, and with whom could He have lived? This do, my brother, and pray for me. The Lord be with thee, in whom farewell.

Thy brother,

MARTIN LUTHER,

Augustinian.

III

The XCV Theses

(October 31, 1517)

[As professor at the University, Luther treated, in the course of his lectures, of the theory of indulgences, while as associate pastor of the City-church, preaching the gospel of grace and hearing confession, he experienced in the most direct and practical way their harmful results. The Dominican John Tetzel was the principal agent of the "indulgence campaign" of that period, and although forbidden by Frederick the Wise to enter his domain, he yet came as far as the little town of Jueterbog, just across the border, and attracted thither a great many people from Saxony, among them some of Luther's parishioners. On the eve of All Saints' (October 31, 1517) Luther posted ninety-five theses, or propositions, on indulgences on the University bulletin-board at the door of the Castle-church. They were written in the Latin language, and were intended not at all as an appeal to the people, but merely as the basis for an academic discussion of the whole subject. They were very mild in form and substance, and did not attack the system but rather the abuse. No one was more surprised than Luther at the stir they made. The discussion never took place, but in a very short time the theses had spread like wild-fire over all Germany. In the light of the historical result, the posting of the XCV Theses was seen to have been the actual beginning of the great Protestant Reformation.—For a good historical and doctrinal introduction to the Theses, see *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: 1915), vol. 1, pp. 15-24.]

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1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said, "Do penance" [Matt. 4:17; the form of this verse in the Roman Bible], desired the whole life of believers to be penance [or, repentance]. 2. This word cannot be understood to mean sacramental penance, i. e.,

confession and satisfaction, as administered by the priests. 3. Nor does it mean inward repentance only; there is no inward repentance which does not outwardly work divers mortifications of the flesh.

5. The pope does not purpose to remit, nor can he remit, any penalties other than those which he has imposed. 6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring and affirming that it has been remitted by God. 20. By "full remission of all penalties," therefore, the pope means not actually "of all," but only of those imposed by him. 21. Therefore, those preachers of indulgences err, who say that by the pope's pardons a man is freed from every penalty and saved.

27. They preach human fables, who say that as soon as the penny goes jingling into the money-box, the soul flies out of purgatory. 32. They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon [or indulgences]. 33. Men should rather be on their guard against those who say that the pope's pardon is that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to Him. 35. They preach no Christian doctrine who teach that contrition is not necessary in those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy *confessionalia*.† 37. Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all

†Privileges entitling their holders to choose their own confessors, and relieving them of certain satisfactions.

the blessings of Christ and the Church; and this is granted him by God, even without letters of pardon.

43. Christians should be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than if he bought pardons; 44. Because love grows by works of love, and men become better; but by indulgences men do not grow better but only more free from penalty. 46. Christians should be taught that unless they have more than they need, they are bound to keep back what is necessary for their own families, and by no means to squander it on indulgences. 50. Christians should be taught that if the pope knew of the exactions of the pardon-hawkers, he would rather that St. Peter's Church [to the building of which a part of the indulgence money was devoted] should go to ashes, than that it should be built up with the skin, flesh and bones of his sheep. 53. They are enemies of Christ and of the pope, who cause the Word to be altogether silent in certain churches, in order that indulgences may be preached in others. 54. Injury is done to the Word of God when, in a sermon, an equal or longer time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word of God.

56. The "treasures of the Church," out of which the pope grants indulgences, are not sufficiently named or known among the people of Christ. 62. The true treasure of the Church is the most holy Gospel of the grace and glory of God. 63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, because it makes the first to be last. 64. On the other hand, the treasure of in-

dulgences is naturally most acceptable, because it makes the last to be first.

69. Bishops and curates are bound to admit the commissaries of apostolic [papal] pardons with all reverence. 70. But still more are they bound to strain all their eyes and attend with all their ears, lest these men preach their own dreams instead of the commission of the pope. 71. Whoever speaks against the truth of apostolic pardons, let him be anathema. 72. But whoever guards against the lust and license of the pardon-preachers, let him be blessed. 79. To say that the cross emblazoned with the papal arms, which is set up by the preachers of indulgences, is of equal worth with the cross of Christ, is blasphemy.

81. This unbridled preaching of pardons makes it no easy matter, even for learned men, to rescue the reverence due to the pope from slander, or even from the shrewd questionings of the laity. 90. To repress these arguments and scruples of the laity by force alone, and not to resolve them by giving reasons, is to expose the Church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies, and to make Christians unhappy. 91. If therefore, pardons were preached according to the spirit and mind of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved, nay, they would never arise.

92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace. 93. Blessed be all those prophets who say to Christ's people, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross. 94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in

following Christ their Head, through penalties, deaths and hell, 95. And thus to be confident of entering heaven through many tribulations [Acts 14:22] rather than through the assurance of peace.

IV

The Lord's Prayer Said Forwards and Backwards

(1519)

[Luther was pre-eminently a man of prayer. As a student his motto was,—"To pray well is to study well," and as a man,—"Prayer, meditation, and tribulation make a theologian." "I am so busy," he once said, "that if I did not spend at least two or three hours each day in prayer, I could not get through the day." We are told that he once prayed Melanchthon back to life from what was thought to be a fatal illness. The writings in which he deals with prayer are among the most precious products of his pen. One of the earliest of these is the little sketch here given, notable for the simplicity and quaintness of its conception (comp. chap. xxii).]

The prayer of our Lord and Saviour, the holy "Our Father," may be prayed both forwards and backwards.

I

This blessed prayer is prayed forwards when the various petitions are said in the order in which they stand, to wit:—

1. The first and principal thing is the hallowing of God's name. When this is done, all else will follow,

2. But the name of God cannot be perfectly hallowed until this life of ours, which is never without sin, or the dishonoring of God's name, has reached its close and the kingdom of God is come. In order, therefore, that we may not for selfish reasons seek the

kingdom of God, the hallowing of God's name is put first; so that we are to pray for our salvation and the coming of God's kingdom, not to the end that it may be well with us, but that the name, honor and glory of God may be praised and magnified. For when His name is praised, our wellbeing and salvation follow of themselves.

3. Now the kingdom of God cannot come unless His will is done. And this is the will of God—that we should be sanctified and should kill and destroy our sins and vices by means of the cross and death of Christ our Lord. Wherefore we pray as long as we are in this life, that this will may be accomplished.

4. In our endeavors to do the will of God and in our labors to overcome sin, we need above all else the assistance of the Word of God and the Sacrament of Christ. This we have when the Word becomes our daily bread, whereby the spirit is nourished and strengthened and the flesh is destroyed. Although by "daily bread" it is possible that material bread is meant†

5. But as long as we are in this life, our words and deeds are never free from sin, and although our sins are forgiven before God in heaven, yet this is not really known to us.‡ We therefore pray for certainty of

†Luther here begins to forsake the traditional interpretation of the fourth petition, in which the "bread" was understood in a spiritual sense. The Vulgate has "supersubstantial bread." Compare the explanation of "daily bread" in the two Catechisms.

‡A passing echo of the uncertainty of conscience produced by the elaborate Roman system of penance.

conscience whereby we may know and be sure that our sins are really forgiven, and may do God's will in word and deed with joyful hearts.

6. When we have obtained this certainty of conscience that our sins are forgiven, it is necessary that the same should be kept constant and steadfast. For we are afflicted by manifold temptations, which come upon us by the will of God. Therefore we pray, not indeed that we may be free from such afflictions, but that we may be sustained therein and saved, and not be brought into temptation.

7. After having thus sought, and having done within ourselves, nothing but the things that are God's, we may then properly turn our eyes upon ourselves and pray last of all to be delivered from evil. Thus we put God first and ourselves last, we exalt God and abase ourselves; in order that we may become, in God, the first and be exalted.

II

The petitions of the Lord's Prayer are also prayed backwards, namely by those who pray only with their lips and not in their heart. Such persons seek their own honor, name and glory rather than the glory of God.

1. They desire to be delivered and set free from all evil, in order that they may lead happy lives and glory in their good fortune.

2. They do well if they also desire not to be led into temptation; they would like to be without evil, careless whether it be God's will or no.

3. After that these men pray—or perhaps it is more correct to say they never pray—for the forgiveness of their sins.

4. Still less do they pray for the Bread [see above].

5. That God's will be done;

6. That God's kingdom come;

7. That God's name be hallowed—for these things they pray not at all, but rather seek and desire, above all things, their own name, their own kingdom or supremacy, and their own will.

It is therefore well worth noting that the first three petitions contain the word "Thy", and those that follow contain the words "us" and "our." This is intended to teach us to seek and desire first of all God's honor, kingdom and will, and only thereafter the things that pertain to ourselves, yet even these in no other way than by means of the things that pertain to God's glory, kingdom and will. Amen.

V

Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation: Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate

(1520)

["In his other works we learn to know him as the man of God, or the prophet, or the theologian; in this treatise we meet Luther the *German*. His heart is full of grief for the affliction of his people, and grief turns to wrath as he observes that this affliction is put upon them by the tyranny and greed of the pope and the cardinals and the 'Roman vermin.' The situation is desperate; appeals and protests have been all in vain; and so as a last resort, he turns to the temporal authorities,—to Charles V, newly elected but as yet uncrowned; to the temporal lords, great and small, who have a voice in the imperial diet and powers of jurisdiction in their own domains,—reciting the abuses of 'Roman tyranny,' and pleading with them to intervene in behalf of the souls that are going to destruction 'through the devilish rule of Rome.' It is a cry out of the heart of Germany, a nation whose bent is all religious, but which, from that very circumstance, is all the more open to the insults and wrongs and deceptions of the Roman curia. Yet it is no formless and incoherent cry, but an orderly recital of the ills of Germany. There are times when we feel in reading it that the writer is laying violent hands on his own wrath in the effort to be calm. For all its scathing quality, it is a sane arraignment of those who 'under the holy name of Christ and St. Peter' are responsible for the nation's woes, and the remedies that are proposed are, many of them, practicable as well as reasonable. —Its frank outspokenness about the true condition of Germany, the number and variety of the subjects that it treats, the multiplicity of the sources from which the subject-matter is drawn, and the point of view from which the whole is discussed, make it a work of absorbing interest and priceless historical value. It shows. . . . . the things that were in men's minds and the variety of motives which led them to espouse the cause of the Protestant party. Doctrine, eth-

ics, history, politics, economics, all have their place in the treatise. It is not only a 'blast on the war-trumpet,' but a connecting link between the thought of the Middle Ages and that of modern times, prophetic of the new age, but showing how clearly the new is bound up with the old."—Prof. C. M. Jacobs, in *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. ii, pp. 59-60.]

Part I. The Three Walls of the Romanists

The Romanists have with great adroitness built three walls about them, behind which they have hitherto defended themselves in such a manner that no one has been able to reform them; and this has been the cause of terrible corruption throughout all Christendom. *First,* when pressed by the temporal power [the secular government], they have made decrees and said that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but that the spiritual power [the Church] is above the temporal. *Second,* when the attempt is made to reprove them out of the Scriptures, they reply that the interpretation of the Scriptures belongs to the pope alone. *Third,* when threatened with a council, they answer with the fable that no one can call a council but the pope. Thus they sit within the stronghold of these three walls and safely practise all the knavery and wickedness which we at present behold. Now may God help us and give us one of the trumpets with which the walls of Jericho were overthrown [Joshua 6:20], that we may blow down these walls of straw and paper.

Let us first attack the *First Wall* [i. e., the doctrine that the spiritual estate is above the temporal]. It is a pure fiction that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called "the spiritual estate"; but princes, lords, artisans and peasants, "the temporal estate"—truly a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. But let no one be frightened by it; for all Christians are verily of "the spiritual estate," and there is among them no difference save a *difference of office.* Thus St. Paul says (1 Cor. 12:12 ff.) we are all one body, yet every member has its own work whereby it serves every other member, because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all alike Christians; for baptism, the Gospel, and faith alone make us "spiritual" and Christian folk.

Through baptism we are all of us consecrated to the priesthood, as St. Peter says (1 Peter 2:9), "Ye are a royal priesthood, a priestly nation," and the Revelation of St. John (Rev. 5:10), "Thou hast made us by thy blood to be priests and kings."

Since, then, the temporal authorities are baptised with the same baptism and have the same faith and Gospel as we, we must admit that they are priests and bishops, and must regard their office as having a proper and useful place in the Christian community. For whoever has come [he says drastically, "has crawled"] out of the water of baptism can boast that he is already consecrated priest, bishop and pope, though it is not proper that every one should exercise the duties of such an office. Nay, just because we are

all in like manner priests, no one should thrust himself forward and undertake, without the consent and choice of the rest, to do what is in the power of all. [Comp. below, p. 88.]

Therefore, a priest ought to be nothing else than an office-holder in the Church. While he is in office he has precedence; when he is deposed, he is a peasant or townsman like the rest. Without doubt, then, a priest is no longer a priest when he is deposed.

Therefore, just as those who are now styled "spiritual"—priests, bishops, popes—are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, save in so far as they are charged with the administration of the Word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office: so it is with the temporal authorities, —they bear the sword and rod with which to punish the evil and protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his calling, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and each one of them must benefit and serve the rest by means of his particular work and office, so that in this way many kinds of work may be performed for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of man's body serve one another.

Now you will perceive how Christian is the decree which asserts that the secular power is not above the spiritual estate and may not punish it. That is the same as saying the hand should lend no aid to the eye when it is in pain! Since the secular power is ordained

of God (Rom. 13), to punish evildoers and to protect them that do well, I say it should be left free to perform its functions unhindered throughout the whole body of Christendom, without respect of persons, whether it affect pope, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, or anyone else. For if the mere fact that the secular government occupies a lower place among the Christian estates than the office of the clergy, were sufficient to prevent it from exercising its functions, then the tailors, cobblers, masons, carpenters, pot-boys, tapsters, farmers, and all secular tradesmen should likewise be prevented from providing pope, bishops, priests, and monks with shoes, clothing, dwellings, meat and drink, and from paying them tribute!

The Christian temporal power should therefore fulfil the duties of its office without let or hindrance, regardless whether it be pope or bishop or priest whom it touches. Whoever is guilty, let him take his punishment. All that the canon law has said to the contrary is the merest fiction of Roman arrogance. For St. Paul says to all Christians (Rom. 13:1, 4): "Let every soul (I take that to mean the pope's soul, too) be subject unto the higher powers," etc. St. Peter also says (1 Peter 2:13, 15): "Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, for so is the will of God."

So then, I think this first paper-wall is overthrown, since the temporal power has become a member of the body of Christendom, and is of the spiritual estate, though its work is of a secular nature.

The Second Wall [the pope is the sole interpreter of Scripture; papal infallibility] is still more flimsy and worthless. They desire to be the only masters of Holy Scripture, even though they learn nothing from it as long as they live. They arrogate to themselves all authority, and with insolent juggling of words seek to persuade us that the pope, whether he be a wicked man or a good, cannot err in matters of faith.†

Yet they cannot prove a syllable of this. If it were true, where would be the need or use of the Holy Scriptures? Let us burn them, and be satisfied with the unlearned lords at Rome who are possessed of the Holy Spirit, though He can enter none but pious hearts! Has not the pope erred many times? Who would help Christendom when the pope errs, if we were not to believe another who had the Scriptures on his side, rather than the pope?

It is a wickedly invented fable, and they cannot produce a letter in defence of it, that the interpretation of Scripture or the confirmation of its interpretation belongs to the pope alone. They themselves have usurped this power; and although they allege that it was conferred on Peter when the keys were given to him (Matt. 16), it is plain enough that the keys were not given to Peter alone, but to the whole congregation. Moreover, the keys were not ordained for doctrine or government, but only for the binding and

†This claim of papal infallibility was repeatedly made by the champions of papal power, though it attained to the dignity of an official doctrine only in 1870 (at the Vatican Council).

loosing of sins; whatever additional power of the keys they arrogate to themselves is the merest fiction. Besides, it is not the pope alone who is always in the right, if the article in the Creed is correct, "I believe in one Holy Christian Church." Otherwise the prayer† should run, "I believe in the pope at Rome," and the Christian Church would be reduced to one man—which is nothing short of a devilish and hellish error.—Moreover, if we are all priests, why should we not also have the power to test and judge what is correct or incorrect in matters of faith?—In the olden days, Abraham had to listen to his Sarah (Gen. 21:12), although she was in more complete subjection to him than we are to any man on earth. Balaam's ass, too, was wiser than the prophet himself (Num. 22:28). If God then spoke by an ass against a prophet, why should He not be able even now to speak by a righteous man against a pope? It is therefore the duty of every Christian to do his best to understand and defend the faith, and to condemn all errors.

The *Third Wall* [the pope is above the council] falls of itself, when the other two are down.—They have no warrant in Scripture for their contention that it belongs to the pope alone to convoke a council or to confirm its decrees; this claim is based entirely on their own laws, which are valid only so far as they are not injurious to Christendom or contrary to the laws of God. When the pope deserves punishment, these laws of theirs go out of force, since it is injurious

†The Creed, not only said, but prayerfully said.

to Christendom not to punish him by means of a council.—Therefore, whenever necessity demands, and the pope is an offense to Christendom, the first man who is able should, as a faithful member of the whole body, do all he can to bring to pass a truly free† council. And no one can do this so well as the temporal authorities, especially since they also are now fellow-Christians, fellow-priests, fellow-"spirituals," fellow-lords over all things.

But all their boasts of an authority that dare not be opposed amount to nothing after all. No one in Christendom has authority to do injury, or to forbid the resisting of injury. There is no authority in the Church save for edification. Therefore, if the pope were to use his authority to prevent the calling of a free council, and thus become a hindrance to the edification of the Church, we should have regard neither for him nor for his authority; and if he hurled his bans and thunderbolts, we should disregard his conduct as that of a madman, and relying on God, hurl his ban back on him and coerce him as best we could. Let us, then, hold fast to this: No Christian authority can do anything against Christ, and whatever does anything against Christ is the power of Antichrist and of the devil, even though it were to rain and hail wonders and plagues.

[Summary.] Thus I hope that the false, lying terror, with which the Romans have this long time made our conscience timid and stupid, has been allayed.

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†That is, one not subject to the pope.

(1) They, like all of us, are subject to the temporal sword; (2) they have no power to interpret the Scriptures by mere authority without scholarship; (3) they have no authority to prevent a council or, in sheer wantonness, to pledge it, bind it, or take away its liberty: if they do this, they are in truth the communion of Antichrist and of the devil, and have nothing at all of Christ save the name.

Part II. Abuses to be Discussed in Councils

1. [Wordliness of the pope.] It is a horrible and frightful thing that the ruler of Christendom, who boasts of being vicar of Christ and successor to St. Peter, lives in such worldly splendor that no king nor emperor can compare with him; and that he who claims the title of "most holy" and "most spiritual" is more worldly than the world itself. He wears a triple crown, while the greatest kings wear but a single crown. If that is like the poverty of Christ and of St. Peter, it is a new sort of likeness. I think that if the pope were to come before God with prayers and tears, he would have to lay aside those crowns of his, for our God cannot abide pride. And what else ought his office to consist in than in offering prayers and tears every day for the Church, and in setting an example of all humility?—An ordinary bishop's crown would suffice for the pope. He should surpass other men in wisdom and holiness, and leave the crowns of pride to Antichrist. They say he is lord of the world. That is not true; for Christ, whose vicar he boasts himself,

said before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and no vicar's rule can extend beyond that of his lord. Moreover, he is not the vicar of the glorified, but of the crucified Christ.

2. [Cardinals.]—What is the use in Christendom of the people called cardinals? I will tell you. There are in Italy and Germany many rich monasteries, foundations, benefices and livings. No better way has been discovered to bring them all to Rome than by creating cardinals and giving them the bishoprics, monasteries and prelacies, whereby the worship of God is suppressed. Thus it happens that we now see Italy turned into a very wilderness—monasteries in ruins, bishoprics devoured, the prelacies and revenues of all the churches drawn to Rome, cities decayed, land and people laid waste, and worship and preaching abandoned. Why? The cardinals must have the income. No Turk could have so devastated Italy and suppressed the worship of God. And now that Italy is sucked dry, they come to Germany. And they begin—oh, ever so gently! But let us beware, or Germany will soon become a second Italy. Already we have a number of cardinals; what the purpose of the Romans is, "the drunken Germans" are not to know, until we have not a bishopric, a monastery, a living, a benefice, a *heller* or a *pfennig* left. Antichrist must needs take the treasures of the earth, as it was foretold (Dan. 11:39, 43). I advise that the number of cardinals be reduced, or that the pope be compelled to provide for them out of his own pocket.—How is it that we Germans must put

up with such robbery and extortion at the hands of the pope? If the kingdom of France has prevented it, why do we Germans let them make such fools and apes of us?—Even if there were not a single cardinal, the Church would not go under.

3. [The Curia.]—If ninety-nine parts of the papal court were done away and only the hundredth part allowed to remain, it would still be large enough to give decisions in matters of faith. Now, however, there is such a swarm of vermin yonder in Rome, all boasting that they are "papal," that there was never anything like it in Babylon. There are more than 3,000 papal secretaries alone, and who will count the other offices? And they all lie in wait for the prebends and benefices of Germany as wolves lie in wait for sheep. I believe that Germany now gives a great deal more to the pope at Rome than it gave in former times to the emperors. Indeed, according to some estimates, more than 300,000 *gulden* annually find their way from Germany to Rome, quite uselessly and without any return; we get nothing for it but contempt and scorn. And yet we wonder that princes, cities, endowments, land and people are impoverished. We had better wonder that we still have anything to eat.

Part III. Proposals for Reform

[He discusses 27 in all, covering a very wide range, such as the following:]

21. One of the greatest needs is the abolition of all begging throughout Christendom. Among Christians no one ought to go a-begging. It would be easy to pass a law, if we only had the courage and the will to do it, to the effect that every city should provide for its own poor and admit no foreign beggars, whatever name they might bear, whether pilgrims or mendicant friars. Every city should support its own poor, or if it be too small, the folk in the surrounding villages should also be exhorted to contribute, since they have at any rate to feed so many vagabonds and knaves in the guise of mendicants. In this way, too, it could be ascertained who were really poor and who not. There would need to be an overseer or warden, who knew all the poor and informed the city council or the priests of their needs.

To be sure, some think that in this way the poor would not be so well provided for, and that not so many great stone houses and monasteries would be built. This I can well believe. Nor is it necessary. Whoever wants to be poor should not be rich; if he wants to be rich, let him put his hand to the plow and seek his riches in the earth. It is enough if the poor are decently cared for, so that they do not perish of hunger or cold. It is not fitting that one man should live in idleness on another's labor, or be rich and live in comfort at the cost of another's discomfort, as is the present perverse custom; for St. Paul says (2 Thess. 3:10), "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat."

27. There is great need of a general law and decree of the German nation against the extravagance and excess in dress, by which so many nobles and rich men are impoverished. God has given to us, as to other lands, enough wool, hair, flax, and everything else which serves for the proper and honorable dress of every rank, so that we do not need to squander such enormous sums for silk, velvet, golden ornaments and other foreign wares.—In like manner it is necessary to restrict the spice-traffic, which is another of the great ships that carry good money out of German lands. There grows among us, by God's grace, more to eat and drink than in any other land, and every whit as choice and good.

We must put a bit in the mouth of the Fuggers [the great Augsburg trading-company] and similar corporations. How is it possible that in the lifetime of one man such enormous possessions, worthy of a king, can be amassed and everything be done legally and according to God's will?

And then there is the abuse of eating and drinking which gives us Germans such a bad name in foreign lands, as though it were our particular vice. Preaching cannot stop it; it has become too common and has gained the upper hand. The waste of money which it causes would be a small thing, were it not followed by other sins—murder, adultery, stealing, irreverence, and all the vices. The temporal sword can do little to prevent it; it will be as Christ says: "The last day shall come like a secret snare, when they shall be eat-

ing and drinking, marrying and wooing, building and planting, buying and selling" (Luke 21 :34 f.) It is so much like that at present I verily believe the judgment day is not far off, though men now least of all look for it.

VI

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church
(1520)

[Only two months after the *Open Letter* Luther published his *Babylonian Captivity.* As in the former we see Luther the German, so here Luther the theologian. It was written for the learned world, in the Latin language, and is a most elaborate examination and critique of the Roman sacramental system as expressed in the doctrine and practice of baptism, confirmation, penance, communion, marriage, ordination, and extreme unction. His method is entirely scriptural, lenient toward all non-essentials, but inflexible over against all essentials. After he is through with the seven sacraments, but two remain—baptism and the Lord's Supper. The treatise marks Luther's definite break with the theology of Rome, and brought him into a hard fray with King Henry VIII of England.—See *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. ii, 167 ff.]

Willy nilly, I am compelled to become every day more learned, with so many able masters vying with one another to improve my mind. Some two years ago I wrote a little book on indulgences, which I now deeply regret having published; for at the time I was still sunk in a mighty superstitious reverence for the Roman tyranny and held that indulgences should not be altogether rejected, seeing they were approved by the common consent of men. Since then, however, through the kindness of Sylvester and the friars, who so strenuously took up the defense of indulgences, I have come to see that they are nothing but an imposture of the Roman sycophants by which they play havoc with men's faith and fortunes. Would to God I could pre-

vail upon the booksellers and upon my readers to burn up the whole of my writings on indulgences and substitute for them this proposition: *Indulgences are a Knavish Trick of the Roman Sycophants.*

Next came Eck and Emser, with their fellows, who undertook to instruct me concerning the supremacy of the pope. Here again, in order not to prove ungrateful to such learned folk, I acknowledge how greatly I have profited by their labors. For, while denying the divine authority of the papacy, I had yet acknowledged its human authority. But after hearing and reading the subtle subtleties of these coxcombs with which they adroitly prop their idol, I now know of a certainty that the papacy is the kingdom of Babylon and the power of Nimrod the mighty hunter.

And now they are putting me to school again and teaching me about communion in both kinds [that is, communion in which both bread and wine are administered; communion in one kind refers to the administration of the bread alone]. Here I must fall to with all my might in order not to hear these my pedagogues in vain . . . . . .

I must deny at the outset that there are seven sacraments, and hold for the present to but three—baptism, penance [later in the course of the treatise he gives up penance also], and the bread [communion; so called because the cup was not administered to the laity]. These have been subjected to a miserable captivity by the Roman curia [papal court], and the Church has been completely deprived of her liberty.

I. *The Bread*

1. [The first captivity: the withholding of the cup from the laity.]

John VI is to be entirely excluded from this discussion, for there is not a single syllable in it about the sacrament. Not only was the sacrament not yet instituted when these words were spoken, but the whole context plainly shows that Christ is speaking of faith in the Word made flesh. He says "My words are spirit, and they are life," which shows that He is speaking of a spiritual eating, whereby whoever eats has life. No eating can give life save the eating which is by faith, for that is the true spiritual and living eating. The sacramental eating does not of itself give life, for many eat unworthily. Therefore He cannot be understood as speaking in this passage of the sacrament.

There are two passages that do clearly bear upon our subject—the Gospel narratives of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and Paul in 1 Cor. 11. Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that Christ gave the entire sacrament to all the disciples, and it is clear that Paul delivered both kinds [bread and wine; 1 Cor. 11:23 ff.]. Further, Matthew reports that Christ said not of the bread, "*Eat* ye all of it," but of the cup, "*Drink* ye all of it," and Mark does not say, "they all *ate* of it," but "they all *drank* of it." Matthew and Mark both attach the note of universality to the cup, not to the bread, as though the Spirit had anticipated this heresy by which some are forbidden to partake of the cup which Christ desired should be common to all.

How furiously would they rave against us if they had found the word "all" attached to the bread instead of the cup! But now that it stands on our side, and against them, they will not be bound by any force of logic.

2. [The second captivity: Transubstantiation.†]

I have at length found rest for my conscience in the view that it is real bread and real wine in which Christ's real flesh and blood are present. There are good grounds for this view of mine, and this above all: No violence is to be done to God's words, whether by man or angel; they are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in their literal and grammatical sense, unless the context plainly forbids; lest we give our opponents occasion to make a mockery of all the Scriptures. Why do we not cling simply to the word of Christ, willing to remain ignorant of what here takes place, and content with this,—that the real body of Christ is present by virtue of the words? Or is it necessary to comprehend the precise manner of the divine working down to the tiniest detail?

3. [The third captivity: the mass is made a good work and a sacrifice.]

This is the most wicked abuse of all . . . . . The mass [Luther and the earlier Protestant writers, as

†The theory of the Church of Rome that in the Lord's Supper the substance of the bread and wine is miraculously transformed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, while retaining its attributes, such as form, color, taste, etc.

well as the Lutheran Confessions, retain this word for the service of communion] is nothing else than the divine promise or testament of Christ, sealed with the sacrament [i. e., the sign] of His body and blood. If that is true, you will see that it cannot possibly be a work, that there is nothing that we do in it, and that it cannot be partaken in any other way than by faith alone. And faith is not a work, but the mistress and the life of all works. Where in all the world is there a man so foolish as to regard a promise made to him, or a testament given to him, as a good work which by his acceptance of it he renders to the testator? Where is the heir who imagines he is doing his departed parent a kindness by agreeing to the terms of his will and accepting the inheritance bequeathed to him?

What wicked presumption is it, therefore, when we who are to receive the testament of God approach the altar as persons who would perform a good work for Him! When we ought to be grateful for a benefit to be received, we come in our arrogance to give that which we ought to take, mocking with unheard-of perversity the mercy of the Giver by giving as a good work the thing we receive as a gift; so that the Testator, instead of being the dispenser of His own goods, is made to be the beneficiary of ours. Out upon such godless doings!

II. *Baptism*

1. The first thing to be considered in baptism is the divine promise—"He that believeth and is bap-

tised shall be saved" [Mark 16:16]. This promise must be set far above all the glitter of works, vows, religious orders, and whatever man has added thereto; for on it alone our salvation depends . . . . Just as the truth of this divine promise, once pronounced over us, continues until our death, so our faith in the same ought never to cease, but to be nourished and strengthened until death, by the continual remembrance of this promise made to us in our baptism.

Therefore, when we rise from our sins, or repent, we do but return to the power and the faith of our baptism from whence we fell, and find our way back again to the promise there made to us, from which we departed when we sinned. For the truth of the promise once made remains steadfast, ever ready to receive us back with open arms.

2. The second part of baptism is the sign or sacrament, which is that immersion into the water whence it also derives its name; for the Greek *baptizo* means "I immerse," and *baptisma* means "immersion" . . . . . Baptism, then signifies two things—death and resurrection, that is, full and complete justification. The minister's plunging the child into the water signifies death, his drawing it forth again signifies life. Thus St. Paul expounds it in Rom. 6:4. This death and resurrection we call the new creation, regeneration, and the spiritual birth. For this reason I would have the candidate for baptism completely immersed in the water, as the word indicates and as the sacrament [sign] signifies. Not that I deem this necessary, but

it were well to give to so perfect and complete a significance a perfect and complete sign.

Baptism is not the matter of a moment, but continues for all time. Although its administration is soon over, yet the thing it signifies continues until we die, nay until we rise at the last day. For as long as we live we are continually doing that which our baptism signifies—we die and rise again. All our life should be baptism, and the fulfilling of the sign, or sacrament, of baptism; we have been set free from all else and wholly given over to baptism, that is, to death and resurrection.

3. [The glorious liberty of the baptised.]

Neither pope nor bishop nor any other man has the right to impose a single syllable of law upon a Christian without his consent; and if he does, it is in the spirit of tyranny. Therefore, the prayers, fasts, donations, and whatever else the pope decrees and demands in all his decretals, are without any authority whatever; he sins thereby against the liberty of the Church. . . . . I admit that Christians ought to bear this accursed tyranny, just as they would any other violence of this world, according to Christ's word, "If one smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other." [Matt. 5:39]

4. [Vows, and the baptismal vow.]

One thing more will I add—and would to God I might persuade all to do it. I would have men completely abolish or avoid all vows, be they vows to enter religious orders, to go on pilgrimage, or to do any work

whatever; in order that we may remain in the liberty of our baptism, which is the most religious and rich in good works . . . . . For we have vowed enough in baptism, more indeed than we shall ever be able to perform; if we give ourselves to the keeping of this one vow, we shall have all that we can do.

[In a similar manner Luther takes up the remaining five so-called sacraments, and concludes his treatise with these words:]

I hear a rumor of fresh papal bulls and maledictions against me, in which I am urged to recant or be declared a heretic [see chap. viii]. If this is true, I desire this book to be a portion of the recantation I shall make; so that these tyrants need not complain of having had their plans for nothing. The remainder I shall publish ere long, and it will, please Christ, be such as the Roman See has hitherto neither seen nor heard. In the name of our Lord Jesus: Amen.

Why doth that impious Herod fear
When told that Christ the King is near
He takes not earthly realms away,
Who gives the realms that ne'er decay.

VII

The Liberty of a Christian Man
(1520)

[This is the third of the great reformatory treatises of the wonderful year 1520. After the mighty thunder of the former two, it comes indeed as a still small voice. Having overthrown the three walls behind which Rome sat entrenched in her temporal power, and having entered and taken her central sanctuary—the sacramental system by which she accompanied her members from the cradle to the grave—Luther now sets forth in language of almost lyrical rapture the liberty of the Christian man. The *Nobility* was addressed to the German nation as such, and is written in the language of the people; the *Captivity,* as becomes a theological treatise, was composed in Latin; the *Liberty,* touching the religious life of the individual, whether layman or theologian, is sent out in both German and Latin. It is perhaps the most beautiful of his many writings, in its firm grasp on the heart of the Gospel, in the originality of its conception, and in the tender inwardness of its spirit. In his dedicatory letter to Pope Leo X, Luther says of it: "It is a slight thing, if thou regard its bulk; but unless I am deceived, it contains in a brief form the sum of Christian living."—Compare *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. ii, 297-348.]

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1. In order that we may thoroughly understand what a Christian man is, and what the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free, I will set down these two propositions:—

A Christian man is a most free lord over all things, and subject to no one:

A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all things, and subject to everyone.

These two propositions are plainly found in St. Paul—"Though I am free from all men, yet have I

made myself servant unto all" (1 Cor. 9:19); and, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Rom. 13:8).

2. In order to understand these two contradictory sayings about liberty and bondage, we need to remember that every Christian man is of a twofold nature—a spiritual and a bodily. So far as his spirit is concerned, he is called a spiritual, or new, or inward man; so far as flesh and blood are concerned, he is called a carnal, or old, or outward man. And because of this duality of nature the Scriptures assert of him things which are directly contrary to each other, such as the aforementioned liberty and bondage.

I

3. Let us consider first the *inward, spiritual* man, in order to see what makes him a free and righteous Christian man. Now, it is clear that no outward thing whatsoever can make him free and righteous. For his righteousness and liberty, as well as his wickedness and bondage, are not physical nor external. What does it profit the soul if the body be free, enjoying good health, eating and drinking, and doing whatever it pleases? On the other hand, how can it harm the soul if the body be in bondage, sick or infirm, hungry and thirsty, and enduring unpleasant things? None of these things touch the soul; none can effect its liberty or bondage, its righteousness or wickedness.

5. There is nothing else in heaven or on earth by which the soul may live and be righteous, free and Christian, than the holy Gospel, the Word of God. . . . . Let us be sure of this, that the soul can do without everything else save the Word of God, and without the Word of God nothing else can help her. But if she has this she needs naught else, but has in that Word abundance of food, joy, peace, light, power, righteousness, truth, wisdom, liberty and every good thing.

6. If you ask what this word is, that bestows such grace, and how it is to be used, I answer: It is nothing else than the good news about Christ contained in the Gospel. Here is God saying to you that all your life and works are naught in His sight, and that you must perish forever with all that is within you. When you truly believe this, you must needs despair of self and acknowledge the truth of Hosea's saying,—"O Israel, thus hast thou destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help" (Hos. 13:9). Then, in order that you may come out of your destruction, He sets before you His dear Son Jesus Christ, and calls upon you through His living and comfortable Word to yield yourself to Him in firm faith and confidence in Him, and all your sins shall be forgiven because of this same faith, all your destruction overcome, you shall be righteous, true, at peace, and pious, all commandments shall be fulfilled, and you shall be free from all things; as St. Paul says, "A justified Christian shall live by faith

alone" (Rom. 1:17), and "Christ is the end and fulfilment of all commandments unto them that believe" (Rom. 10:4).

8. But how is it that faith alone can make one righteous and without any works confer such inestimable riches, seeing there are so many commands, laws, works and ceremonies prescribed in the Scriptures? Here we need to keep diligently in mind the fact that it is faith alone, without works, that justifies, makes free and saves, as we shall afterwards hear at greater length. We need also to know that all Scripture falls into two parts—God's law or command, and God's promise. The commands teach and prescribe manifold good works, but with all that these works are far from being done. The commands point out the way, but lend no help; they teach what we ought to do, but furnish no strength for the doing. Hence their purpose is only to bring home to us our inability to do good and to plunge us into despair. That is why they are called the Old Testament and belong one and all to the Old Testament.

9. When a man has come to feel his helplessness, through the commands, and despairs of fulfilling the law, which yet must be fulfilled or he be damned, then he is well humbled and brought low in his own sight, and finds nothing in himself to make him righteous. Then comes the other part of Scripture,—the divine promise, which tells him: "If you desire to keep the commands, and be rid of your evil desires and sins,

believe in Christ, in whom I promise you all grace, righteousness, peace and liberty. If you believe, you have; if you believe not, you have not. For, all that you cannot do by the works of the law, you can do easily and at once through faith." Thus the promises of God give what the law demands, and fulfil what the law requires, so that all may be of God alone, the command and also the fulfilment. Hence the promises are the New Testament and belong to the New Testament.

10. But these words of God, as all words of God, are holy, true, righteous, peaceable, free, and full of all goodness. Hence, if one clings to them in true faith, his soul is so intimately joined to them that all the virtues of the Word become his possessions. Thus, by contact with the Word of God, the soul becomes holy, righteous, true, peaceful, free, and filled with all goodness—a true child of God, through faith, as John says: "To them that believe on His name he giveth power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12).

15. Now, Christ, who is the first-born, with all the honor and dignity this implies, imparts this birthright to all His Christians. Through faith they, too, must needs be kings and priests together with Christ, as St. Peter says: "Ye are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom" (1 Peter 2:9). And this is the manner of it. A Christian man is exalted so highly above all things, by faith, that he is a spiritual lord over all. For nothing can do him any harm so far as his salvation is concerned; all things must rather be subject to him

and serve him to his salvation (Rom. 8:28). Not that we are in a physical sense lords over all things, to possess or use them as men living on earth; for we must needs suffer bodily death which none can escape, and are subject perforce to many other things, as we see in Christ and His saints. But this is a spiritual lordship, ruling in the midst of physical oppression; that is to say, I can use all things to further my soul's progress, so that even death and pain must serve me to my salvation. This is a high and glorious dignity, and a true and almighty lordship, a spiritual kingdom, in which nothing is so good, nothing so evil, but it must work together for good to me, if I believe; and yet I really need none of these things, for my faith is all-sufficient. What a precious liberty and power the Christian has!

16. But we are also priests, worthy to appear before God in behalf of other men. Christ has obtained this for us, that we may in a spiritual manner intercede and pray for one another, as the priests intercede and pray in a bodily manner for the people . . . . . Who can comprehend the lofty dignity of the Christian! As king, he rules over all things, death, life and sin; as priest, he is all-powerful with God, for God does whatever he asks and desires.

19. Let this suffice for the inward man, his liberty and righteousness, which need no law nor good works, nay, are harmed by them if one should presume to be justified thereby.

II

We now come to the second part—*the outward man.* Here we will make reply to those who take offence at the above and say: "Well, if faith is everything and all-sufficient to make us righteous, why then are good works commanded? Let us take our ease and do no works!" Not so, my dear sir, not so. It would indeed be so, if you were wholly an inward man and had become altogether spiritual and inward, which will not come to pass until the last day. Everything on earth is and remains but a beginning and a growth, that must be completed in yonder life . . . . Here is, therefore, the place for the second of our propositions: A Christian man is a most dutiful servant and subject to everyone. That is to say, so far as he is free, he need do nothing; but so far as he is a servant, he must do many things. Let us see what that means.

20. Although, inwardly and so far as his soul is concerned, a man is perfectly justified by faith and has everything that he needs, save that this faith and sufficiency of his must constantly grow and increase unto the life to come; yet he remains still in this bodily life here on earth, and must needs *rule his own body* and also *consort with other men.* Here is where the works come in. Here he dare not be idle; here of a truth the body must needs be driven and trained with fasting, watching, working, and every sort of discipline within reasonable bounds, so that it may become obedient and conform to the inward man and to faith, and not rebel nor prove a hindrance, as is its nature to do.

The inward man is one with God, blithe and joyful for Christ's sake, who has done such great things for him; all his pleasure consists in striving to serve God again in willing love. But he discovers a contrary will in his flesh, a will that would serve the world and seek its own good pleasure. This thing faith cannot tolerate, and so it falls joyously upon the flesh to put it under and hold it in check; as St. Paul says: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23).

23. These two sayings, therefore, are true: (1) Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; (2) evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works. So that it is always necessary that the person himself be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from a good person; as Christ says: "A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18).

It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree, nor does the tree grow on the fruits; but the tree bears the fruits and the fruits grow on the tree. The trees, therefore, must exist before the fruits, and the fruits do not make the trees either good or corrupt, but as the trees are, so are the fruits they bear. Even so the person of man must first be good or wicked before he

can perform a good or a wicked work, and his works do not make him either good or wicked, but he himself makes his works either good or wicked. Illustrations of this truth abound in every trade. A good or a bad house does not make a good or a bad builder, but a good or a bad builder makes a good or a bad house. In short, the work never makes the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like himself.

Since, then, works justify no one, and a man must be righteous before he can do a good work, it is very evident that it is faith alone which, on account of the pure mercy of God through Christ in His Word, worthily and sufficiently justifies and saves the person; and a Christian man has no need of any work or law in order to be saved, for he is freed through faith from every law and does all that he does freely and out of pure liberty, seeking thereby neither benefit nor salvation, since he already abounds in all things and is saved through the grace of God because of his faith, and now seeks only to please God.

25. From all this we can readily see in what sense good works are to be rejected and in what sense they are not to be rejected, and by what standard all the teachings of men about good works are to be judged. If works are sought after as a means of attaining righteousness and are done under the false impression that we are justified by them, they are no longer good but truly damnable works. For they are not free, and they blaspheme the grace of God, which alone can justify and save by faith. We do not reject good

works; on the contrary, we foster and teach them with all our might.

26. Let this suffice for works in general, and for those works in particular which a Christian man should perform with respect to his own body. Let us come now to the works which he performs *with respect to other men.* For man does not live unto himself alone in his own body, but he lives also in the midst of his fellowmen upon earth (Rom. 14:7 f.). Therefore it is impossible that he should ever be without works toward his fellowmen. For he must of necessity speak to them and have dealings with them, although he needs none of these things for his own righteousness and salvation. In all his works, therefore, he should be guided by this thought, and look to this one thing—to serve and benefit others by all that he does, in willing love. . . . . That is a right Christian life; there faith sets to work gladly and in love.

27. Although the Christian is set at liberty from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon him the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men and formed in fashion as a man, and serve, help, and in every way deal with, his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and is still dealing with himself [Phil. 2:7, 8]. And this he ought to do freely, having regard only to the approval of God. He should think thus: "Though I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation,

without any merit of mine, out of pure and free mercy, so that henceforth I have need of nothing at all save faith which believes that this is so. Why should not I, then, freely and gladly, with all my heart and with an eager will, do whatever I know is pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has showered upon me His unsearchable riches? I will therefore give myself *as a Christ* to my neighbor, even as Christ offered Himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see to be necessary, profitable and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I myself have an abundance of all good things in Christ."

Thus, from faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyous, willing and free mind that gladly serves one's neighbor, taking no account of gratitude or ingratitude, praise or blame, gain or loss . . . . . Just as our neighbor suffers want and stands in need of that which we have in abundance, so we, too, were in want before God and in need of His grace. And just as God helped us freely through Christ, so we should seek only to help our neighbor freely through our body and its works, *and each one become as it were a Christ to the other, so that we may all be Christs to one another,* and that Christ may be the same in all, that is to say, that we may be Christians indeed.

30. We conclude, then, that a Christian man lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. He lives in Christ through faith, and in his neighbor through love. By faith he ascends up to God, whence he descends again to his neighbor by love, and yet re-

mains ever in God and in divine love. . . . Here is the true, spiritual, Christian liberty, that sets the heart free from all sins, laws and precepts, and is as far above every other liberty as the heavens are above the earth. God grant us rightly to understand and hold fast to this liberty: Amen.

VIII

The Burning of the Papal Bull

(December 10, 1520)

[The bull *Exsurge, Domine,* of June 15, 1520, designated forty-one propositions in Luther's writings as heretical, commanded that his books be burned, and threatened him with excommunication unless he recanted within sixty days. Luther retaliated by publicly burning the bull together with the books of the canon law, before the Elster gate of Wittenberg, on December 10, in the presence of many professors and students of the University who had been summoned to this "edifying spectacle" in a Latin notice written by Melanchthon. Luther cast the bull into the flames with the words, "Because thou hast condemned the truth of God, He now condemns thee to this fire."

The following letter, written a month later to his old friend and mentor John Staupitz, affords us a glimpse into Luther's heart during those heroic and humble days. It was Staupitz who, as vicar-general of the Augustinian order, had assisted Luther, in the monastery at Erfurt, in his struggle to find a gracious God, and who was responsible for his call to Wittenberg. Later, he shrank from the consequences of Luther's position, and was now living in retirement at Salzburg, where he died, as Benedictine abbot, December 28, 1524.]

To John Staupitz at Salzburg

Greetings in Christ, most reverend father!

When we were together at Augsburg [in 1518, during Luther's interview with Cardinal Cajetan], discussing my cause, you said to me amongst other things, "Remember, brother, that you have undertaken this work in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Those were not so much your words as the words of God

speaking through you, and as such I have kept them in my heart ever since.

I now give you back your words and say, "Do you, too, remember what you then told me." What we have had thus far was mere child's play, now comes the bitter reality; and, according to your words, unless God carries the work through, it will never be carried through. For everyone can see that the whole matter is now in God's hand; no one can deny it. Who else could help? Of what avail are human plans? The battle is on, and so high does the feeling run on both sides it seems there will be no quieting it until the Last Day.

The papacy is no longer what it was yesterday or the day before. Though they issue bulls of excommunication and pile books on the flames, and though they put me to death, nevertheless there are portentous events before the door. How much better if the pope had sought by good means to effect a peaceable adjustment rather than by brutal force to bring about Luther's destruction. When I burned the pope's books and bull, it was with trembling and with prayer. But now I am happier about it than about any other act of my whole life. For they are more pestilent than I dared believe.

The Emperor's summons arrived in a letter to the Elector, but he would not let me go; so His Majesty immediately recalled the first letter by a second. God alone knows what will be the outcome. Everything is still flourishing here as before [he means at the

University, which had gained in students since the bull-burning]. My books have been burned in three cities—Louvain, Cologne and Mayence, at the latter place amid great derision and danger.

Farewell, beloved father; pray for God's Word and for me. I am carried along on the flood and tossed to and fro.

MARTIN LUTHER,
Augustinian.

Wittenberg, January 14, 1521.

IX

Luther at Worms
(1521)

[After the sixty days were more than up, Pope Leo X put Luther and his followers under the ban (January 3, 1521) and summoned him to appear at the Diet of Worms to be dealt with as a heretic. Luther's elector, Frederick the Wise, the most powerful prince in Germany, insisted that his professor be justly dealt with, and armed with the imperial safe-conduct, Luther set out for Worms. His journey was one long ovation. Fears were felt for his safety, but he was fearless, as is seen from the letter to his dear friend Spalatin, the private secretary of the elector (1). At the diet he uttered his famous words (2), which mark the beginning of modern times. To save him from the treachery of his foes, the elector had him spirited away on his return journey and concealed in his castle Wartburg, overlooking Eisenach, where Luther lived incognito for ten months as Squire George (see chap. x). The mood in which he lent himself to this adventure is seen in the intimate letter (3) to his good friend Lucas Cranach, the artist of Wittenberg (comp. chap. x, introduction).]

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(1) *Letter to Spalatin*
(April 14, 1521)

Greeting.

We are on the way, dear Spalatin, though Satan has been doing his worst to prevent me through illness. All the way from Erfurt I have been very ill, and still am much weaker than I have ever felt before.

I realize, too, that the mandate of Charles was published in order to frighten me. But Christ lives, and I am going to enter Worms in defiance of all

the gates of hell and the powers of the air. [Comp. below, p. 74.]

I am sending you copies of the imperial letter. It does not seem advisable to send any other writing; I prefer to wait until I am on the spot and see for myself what is to be done, lest we should puff up Satan with pride. I would much rather fill him with fear and heap contempt upon him, as I have made up my mind to do.

So have a lodging ready for us.

Fare you well.

MARTIN LUTHER.

Frankfort, 1521.

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(2) *Luther's answer before the Diet, "Without Horns and Teeth"*

(April 18, 1521)

Since your Imperial Majesty and your Lordships demand a plain answer, I will give one without horns and also without teeth.† It is this. I trust in neither pope nor councils by themselves, since it is evident that they have often erred and reversed themselves. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by Scripture proofs or logical argument [i. e., either by direct proof from Scripture texts or by deductions logically drawn from such texts], I am bound by the scriptures I have cited

†See Reu: *Thirty-five years of Luther Research,* p. 66f. (Luth. Church Rev., February, 1917).

and my conscience is held captive in the Word of God. I can recant nothing, and I will recant nothing; for it is a dangerous and a dishonest thing to act against conscience.

This is my position. I can take no other. God help me! Amen.†

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(3) *Letter to Lucas Cranach*

(April 28, 1521)

To the most excellent Master Lucas Cranach, painter at Wittenberg.

Dear gossip‡ Lucas,—

I send you my blessing and commend you to God. I am going to submit to being hidden away, where—I myself do not yet know. I should have preferred being put to death by the tyrants, especially by the furious Duke George of Saxony, but am obliged to yield to the advice of good men and bide my time.

They [the Romanists] did not expect me to come to Worms, and you all know how they kept faith with

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†The authenticity of these last words rests on rather slender historical evidence. But, as Prof. Boehmer well says, "for the appreciation of Luther's attitude in Worms one neither gains nor loses by this omission. The important point is not that the Reformer specifically assured the assembly that he stood there and could not do otherwise, but that he actually did stand firm and could do no other." —*Luther in Light of Recent Research,* p. 38.

‡In the earlier sense of fellow-sponsor, or one's child's sponsor, at baptism. Luther writes *Gevatter.*

me as to the safe-conduct by demanding that my writings should be delivered up.

I imagined His Imperial Majesty would have brought together from one to fifty doctors to vanquish the monk in proper fashion, but all that took place was this:—"Are those books yours?"—"Yes."— "Will you retract them or no?"—"No."—"Then begone!"— O we blind Germans! what children we are, to let the Romanists make such wretched apes and fools of us.

Greet your dear spouse from me and say I hope she is well.

It seems the Jews must sing their "Io! Io!" [His enemies must triumph, as did the Jews on Good Friday]. Yet our Easterday will come, too, when we shall sing "Hallelujah!" But first we must keep silent and suffer for a little. "A little while," says Christ, "and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me" [John 16:16]. I hope it will be so even now. But God's will is best; may it be done in this matter, on earth as it is in heaven: Amen.

Give my regards to Master Christian [Döring, or Aurifaber, a worker in Cranach's studio, who had provided horse and wagon for Luther's journey to Worms, the city-council defraying the expense] and his good wife, and extend my thanks to the Town-council for the conveyance. If Licentiate Feldkirch does not suit, get Amsdorf to preach; he'll be glad to do it.

Farewell, all. I commend you to God. May He keep your reason and your faith in Christ from the Romish wolves and dragons with their rabble: Amen.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER.

Frankfort-on-the-Main, Cantate Sunday, 1521.

X

Prologue to the German New Testament
(1522)

[Although Luther did many notable things at the Wartburg—he worked on his *Church Postil* (a collection of sermons on the gospels and epistles of the Church Year), he completed his fine devotional *Exposition of the Magnificat,* he wrote the important Latin treatise *On Monastic Vows,* besides carrying on a voluminous correspondence with friend and foe—yet the finest fruit of the Wartburg sojourn was his translation of the New Testament into German. There were a number of German translations in circulation at the time; but they were all based on the Latin Vulgate, they were very faulty and inaccurate, and they employed a most unwieldy German. Luther based his translation on the best Greek text of his day (the second edition of Erasmus, 1519), and with the joy of a discoverer and the genius of a master of language, turned it into a German truly of the people, by the people and for the people. Thus his Bible translation has become one of the classics of German literature.

He began his work in December, 1521,—"in the quiet of those winter days, when the snow spread its mantle over the Wartburg woods, and the outside world was buried in deep silence." In the incredibly short space of three months the task was completed. "With the first breath of Spring, when the winds of March sang around the castle, and voices were waking again in the 'kingdom of the birds,' Doctor Luther returned to Wittenberg, carrying with him the completed New Testament. The Swiss students whom he met on the return journey at the Black Bear Inn of Jena said that his eyes glowed and sparkled like stars, and that they could scarcely meet his gaze. So the eyes of Moses must have burned when he came down from the mount."

During the spring and summer the work was thoroughly gone over and revised with the assistance of Melanchthon and other learned friends, and in September, 1522, *The New Testament in German* left the presses at Wittenberg, in an edition of 3,000 copies which was sold out in less than three months. The title page contained no names

of translator or publisher. There was a general prologue besides prologues to the various books, also annotations and parallel passages, and woodcut illustrations by the Wittenberg artist Cranach (see chap. ix, 3). The chapters were not divided into verses, and the passage 1 John 5:7 was not included. —Comp. A. Risch: *Die deutsche Bibel.*]

It would indeed be fitting and proper that this Book should appear without a prologue and with no stranger's name upon it, bearing only its own name and speaking for itself. But since the minds of Christian people have become so confused by many wild commentaries and prefaces that they no longer know the difference between law and Gospel, or Old and New Testament, it has become necessary to prepare a prologue and guide, in order that the plain reader may be brought back from his error into the right way and instructed what to look for in this book, lest he seek God's law and command where he ought to find His Gospel and promise.

†The olde testament is a boke, where in is wrytten the lawe and commaundmentes of god, and the dedes of them which fulfill them, and of them also which fulfill them nott.

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†Here follows a part of Tyndale's prologue to his English translation of the New Testament (first edition, 1525), which is a literal translation of Luther's, and is given here to show the dependence of Tyndale on Luther. It is printed here in the old spelling and is taken from Pollard's *Records of the English Bible* (1911). Tyndale's translation, which was made in Germany, was largely indebted to Luther's and Prof. A. S. Cook of Yale says, "It is agreed on all hands that the English of the Authorized Version is in essentials, that of Tyndale" (*The Authorized Version of the Bible and its Influence,* 1910).

The newe testament is a boke where in are coteyned the promyses of god, and the dedes of them which beleue [believe] them or beleue them nott.

Euangelion (that we cal the gospel) is a greke worde & signyfyth good, mery, glad and ioyfull tydinges, that maketh a mannes hert [heart] glad, and maketh hym synge, daunce and leepe for ioye As when Davyd had kylled Golyath the geaunt, cam glad tydinges vnto the iewes, that their fearfull and cruell enemy was slayne, and they delyvered oute of all daunger: for gladnes were of, they songe, daunsed, and wer ioyfull. In lyke manner is the evangelion of god (which we call gospell, and the newe testament) ioyfull tydings, and as some saye: a good hearing publisshed by the apostles through oute all the worlde, of Christ the right Davyd howe that he hathe fought with synne, with dethe, and the devill, and over cume them. Whereby all men that were in Bondage to synne, wounded with dethe, ouercum of the devill, are with oute there awne merrittes or deservings losed, iustyfyed, restored to lyfe, and saved, brought to libertie, and reconciled vnto the favour of god, and sett at one with hym agayne: which tydinges as many as beleve laude prayse and thancke god, are glad, synge and daunce for ioye.

The evangelion or gospell (that is to saye, suche ioyfull tydinges) is called the newe testament. Because that as a man when he shall dye apoynteth his gooddes to be dealte and distributed after hys dethe amonge them which he nameth to be his heyres. Even so

Christ before his dethe commaunded and appoynted that suche evangelion, gospell, or tydinges shulde be declared through oute all the worlde, and there with to geue [give] vnto all that beleve all his gooddes, that is to saye, his lyfe, where with he swalowed and devoured vp dethe: his rightewesnes, where with he bannyshed synne: his salvacion, wherewith he overcam eternall damnacion. Nowe can the wretched man (that is wrapped in synne, and is in danger to dethe and hell) heare no moare ioyus a thynge, then suche glad and comfortable tydinges, of Christ. So that he cannot but be glad and laugh from the lowe bottom of his hert, if he beleve that the tydynges are trewe.

See, therefore, that you make not Christ a Moses, nor His Gospel a book of laws or doctrines, as has been done hitherto. For the Gospel does not demand our works in order that we may become righteous and be saved; nay, it condemns such works. What it does demand is faith in Christ, which believes that He has overcome sin, death and Satan for us, and thus bestows on us righteousness, life and salvation, not through our works, but through His works, sufferings and death, so that we may claim His death and victory as our own.

You will now be able to judge the differences among the books of the New Testament, and know which are the best books. John's gospel, Paul's epistles, especially Romans, and the first epistle of Peter are the very heart and marrow of all the books; these should in-

deed stand first and be read first and most frequently by every Christian, and become as familiar to him through daily reading as his daily bread.

The gospel of John is the one tender and true chief gospel, and much to be preferred to the other three. In the same manner, the epistles of Paul and the first epistle of Peter are to be preferred to the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke [because they do not make so much of the *works* of Christ but rather emphasize His *teachings*]. In short, John's gospel and his first epistle, the epistles of Paul, especially Romans, Galatians and Ephesians, and the first epistle of Peter—these are the books that reveal Christ to you, and teach all that you need to know in order to be saved . . . . . Compared with them, the epistle of St. James is a right strawy epistle, for there is nothing of the Gospel in it.

Romans is the chief portion of the New Testament, and the most pure Gospel; it well deserves that a Christian man not only learn by heart every word in it, but use it every day as the daily bread of his soul. It can never be read too often nor pondered too deeply, and becomes the more precious the oftener it is used.

Faith is a work of God within us, that changes us and begets us again of God (John 1:13); it slays the old Adam in us, makes us wholly new men in our heart and mind and senses and all our strength, and brings with it the Holy Spirit. O faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing; it is im-

possible that it should not incessantly be doing good. Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question can put, has done the works and is ever doing them. . . . . .Faith is a lively and bold confidence in God's grace. Whoever has it, is so sure of this grace that he would willingly die a thousand deaths for it. Such sure confidence in God's grace fills a man with joy, boldness, and cheerfulness toward God and all creatures. Wherefore he becomes willing and eager, without any compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve all men, and to suffer all things, out of love and praise to God who has shown him such grace. It is therefore as impossible to separate works from faith as it is to separate light and heat. Pray God to work this faith in you; otherwise you will remain forever without it despite all you do and think.

It is the manner of a true apostle, to proclaim Christ's sufferings and resurrection, and to lay the foundation of faith in the same, as He says, "Ye shall testify of me." And all good sacred writings agree in this, that they one and all preach and testify of Christ. This is indeed the true touchstone whereby to judge all books,—whether or not they testify of Christ. Whatever does not proclaim Christ is not apostolic, even if St. Peter or St. Paul were to teach it. On the other hand, whatever does proclaim Christ would be apostolic if Judas, Annas, Pilate or Herod had written it.

I cannot fit my spirit into the Revelation of St. John. Hence I confine myself to those books which clearly and purely set forth Christ to me.

XI

Prologue to the Psalter
(1528)

[The complete German Bible was not ready until 1532, and was published with the Apocrypha in 1534. The translation of the Old Testament took much longer than that of the New, because there were more persons engaged on it, because of the greater length and difficulty of the Old Testament, and because of many interruptions. As each part was completed, it was given to the public; the Psalter in 1524. The prologue given below in condensed form, was written for the new edition of the Psalter, four years later. Even after the whole Bible was translated and published, Luther was constantly at work, with his company of assistants (the "Sanhedrin," as they were called), revising the translation. The last revised edition published during his life was the tenth edition of 1545.—Comp. J. P. Hentz: *The Lutheran Version of the Bible* (but see below p. 161).]

I reckon there was never upon earth a finer book of saints than the Psalter. Here we find the acts not only of one or two saints, but of the Head of all saints, and the acts of all saints of the present as well—what was their relation to God, and to friend and foe, and how they behaved themselves in dangers and trials. Besides this, there are so many and diverse salutary divine doctrines and precepts therein, that methinks in the Psalter the Holy Ghost was at pains to compose a miniature Bible and little book of all Christians or saints, so that if any one could not read the whole Bible through, he might have here a summary of the same compressed into a tiny volume.

Moreover, while other books make a great ado about the *acts* of the saints but record very few of their *sayings,* it is not so with the Psalter. It is a model in this respect (and to him that reads in it becomes therefore all sweet and fragrant), that it contains not only the acts of the saints, but also the words which they addressed to God and uttered in their prayers, and even now utter and pray. Indeed, compared with the Psalter, the other saints'-legends seem to present to us none but mute saints, while the Psalter presents right wide-awake and living saints.

Furthermore, the Psalter does not set forth the commonplace sayings of the saints, but their most notable sayings, spoken by them in deepest earnest, concerning the most vital matters, and addressed to God Himself. . . . . .Where can you find more admirable words of joy and gladness than in the psalms of praise and thanksgiving? In them you look into the hearts of all saints, as it were into fair and pleasant gardens, nay into heaven itself, and see blooming therein, like brave and gallant flowers, all manner of fine and joyous thoughts toward God for His manifold goodness. Again, where will you find more deep and doleful words of sorrow than in the penitential psalms? There you gaze into the hearts of all saints, as into death, yea into hell. What darkness and gloom is there, from the sorrowful contemplation of God's anger. And when they speak of fear or of hope, it is in such words that no

artist could so well depict these emotions nor any Cicero so well describe them.

And best of all, the saints address these words to God, which gives them twofold life and meaning. For, speaking to men in such matters, one is not so deeply moved nor does one's heart burn and glow with so great ardor.

Finally, the Psalter is a safe and trustworthy guide to the right imitation of the saints. Other legends, with their tales of mute saints, set before us many a work that cannot be imitated, and many others whose imitation is fraught with much danger, engenders factions and strife, and disrupts the communion of saints. But the Psalter preserves from strife and faction and fosters the communion of saints, teaching us through joy and sorrow, through hope and fear, to be of one mind with all saints and to make their words our own.

In short, if you would behold the holy Christian Church portrayed in miniature in living form and glowing colors, take up the Psalter: in it you have a bright and spotless mirror to show you what the Church is like. Nay, you will find in it a true *gnothi seauton* ["know thyself"], wherein to behold yourself, together with God and all creatures.

To this may the Father of all grace and mercy help us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be praise, thanks and glory for this German Psalter, and for all His unsearchable and inexpressible goodness, world without end: Amen.

XII

On the Art of Translating

(1530)

[The following selections afford an interesting glimpse into the workshop of the translator of the German Bible. The treatise of which they form a part was written at Coburg (comp. chap. xxiv, introduction) in September, 1530, in reply to an unknown correspondent, who requested Luther to answer the following two questions—(1) Why he inserted the word "alone" in his translation of Romans 3:28, and (2) whether the departed saints intercede for men on earth. The latter question does not concern us here, and the former only so far as it gave Luther an opportunity to discuss in a general way his principles as a translator. In the treatise itself he goes fully into the passage in Romans and into several others.]

If I had been sure that all the papists put together could turn a single chapter of Holy Writ into correct German, I should with becoming modesty have craved their assistance in my translation of the New Testament. But since I knew full well, and still see very clearly, that not one of them knows how to translate anything into German or to speak in German, I have spared them as well as myself the trouble. It is a well known fact that they are now learning from my translation to speak and write the German language. Thus they steal my language, of which they had little enough before; yet they give me no thanks for it, but rather use it to attack me. I do not begrudge it to them, for it pleases me greatly to think that I have taught even my ungrateful disciples and my foes how to speak German.

I translated the New Testament as well as I was able. No one is compelled to read it on that account; everyone can do as he pleases. I made my translation solely for the benefit of those who are unable to make a better one. Nor is anyone forbidden to make a better translation of his own. Whoever will not read mine, let him leave it unread. I will neither beg nor cajole anyone into reading it. It is my Testament and my translation, and it shall remain mine. If I have made mistakes in it (of which I am not aware, and truly I would not willingly mistranslate a single syllable), I will not permit the papists to sit in judgment on me. As yet, their ears are far too long and their braying too weak, to entitle them to criticize my work. I know how much ability, diligence, knowledge and understanding must go to the making of a good translator. They know less about it than the donkey at the mill, for they have never made the attempt.

It was my earnest endeavor, in my translation, to use a pure and clear German. It happened more than once that we spent two, three and four weeks looking for the right word, and then we did not always find it. When we came to Job,—Magister Philip [Melanchthon], Aurogallus [professor of Hebrew at Wittenberg University] and I sometimes completed scarcely three lines in as many days. But now that the work is done, everyone can read it and play the critic. Now one can run through three or four pages without stumbling a single time. He does not know what great rocks and stumps lay in the way, over which he

now passes as over a smooth floor, but to remove which we had to toil in the sweat of our face, that men might find the road so smooth. It is easy ploughing when the ground has been cleared. But no one likes to fell the trees, dig out the stumps, and prepare the soil. There is no getting any thanks from the world. God Himself wins no thanks for His sun, nor for heaven and earth, nor even for the death of His only-begotten Son. Let the world be and remain the world, in the devil's name; that is its whole desire.

I can testify with a good conscience that I have put my best effort and utmost faithfulness on my task, and had no improper motive. I never received nor asked so much as a *heller* for my work. God knows, I did not seek my own honor, but did the work for the good of the dear Christians and to the glory of One who sits above. He sends down upon me every hour so many blessings, that if I had translated a thousand times as much as I did and a thousand times more faithfully, I should not have earned thereby a single hour of life or a sound eye. All that I am and have is altogether of His grace and mercy; nay, it is of His precious blood and sweat of agony. And for this reason it shall be, please God, altogether to His glory, right joyously and heartily. Let the scribblers and papal donkeys scold me all they will; good Christians with their Lord Christ will praise me. I am more than repaid if but a single Christian finds me to have been a faithful workman.

We must not ask the letters of the Latin language to tell us how to speak German, as those donkeys [the Romish writers] do. We must go for this rather to the mother in the house, the children in the lane, the common man in the market place, and watch their mouths, and use in our translation the language that they speak. Then they will understand what we mean, and know that we are speaking to them in German.

Yet, on the other hand, I have not dealt too freely with the letter of Scripture, but with my assistants gave especial care to translate literally in every case where a particular meaning attached to a certain expression. In some places I preferred to run counter to the German idiom, rather than depart from the letter of the original.

Ah, not every one is cut out for this work of translating, as the mad saints imagine. For this skill it needs a heart that is right pious, faithful, diligent, reverent, Christian, learned and experienced. I hold, therefore, that no false Christian or fanatic is able to become a good translator.

XIII

A Princely Letter to a Prince

(March 5, 1522)

[After his involuntary exile of some ten months, Luther felt that his presence was needed in Wittenberg, and on March 1, 1522, he left the seclusion of the Wartburg, against his Elector's wish. On the way home he penned this courageous and God-fearing epistle. It is the most famous of all his letters.]

To the High-born Prince Frederick, Elector of Saxony, etc. Grace and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Most gracious lord:—Your Electoral Grace's letter and gracious instructions reached me on Friday, the evening before the day I had set for my departure. That your Electoral Highness has the best intentions toward me, goes without saying. . . . . Your Grace knows (or if you do not, I herewith inform you of the fact) that I have not received the Gospel from men, but from heaven, through our Lord Jesus Christ, so that I might well boast and call myself a minister and evangelist, as I shall henceforth do. My offering myself for trial and sentence [at Worms], was not due to any doubts I had as to this Gospel, but because I wished by my exceeding humility to induce my opponents to meet me half way. But now that I see my too great humility serves but to abase the Gospel, and that Satan is ready to crowd into the place

I vacate even by only a hand's breadth, my conscience compels me to take a different course.

I have satisfied your Grace by remaining this year in my forced seclusion. For the devil knows it was not done out of cowardice. He looked into my heart, when I entered Worms, and saw that although I had known there were as many devils ready to fall upon me as there were tiles on the house-tops, I should joyfully have sprung into their midst [comp. p. 55]. Now Duke George [through whose territory Luther must needs pass on his way to Wittenberg] is far from being equal to a single devil. And forasmuch as the Father of all mercies has made us, through the Gospel, joyous lords over all devils and death itself, and permitted us to call Him with all confidence our dearly beloved Father, your Grace can see for yourself that it would be the grossest insult one could offer such a Father not to trust Him enough to believe that we are lords also over Duke George's wrath. Were things in Leipzig [Duke George's capital] as they are in Wittenberg, I would nevertheless ride in, even though—will your Grace pardon my foolish words? —even though it rained Duke Georges for nine days running, and each one was nine times more furious than this one. He looks upon my Lord Jesus as a man of straw; but this my Lord and I can well endure for a little. I will confess to your Grace that I have, not once but many times, wept and prayed for Duke George that God would enlighten him. I shall

once more weep and pray for him, and then never again.

I write all this to let your Grace know that I am coming to Wittenberg under far higher protection than that of an Elector. Nor have I the least intention of asking your Electoral Grace's protection. Nay, I consider I am better able to protect your Grace than your Grace is to protect me. And what is more, if I knew that your gracious Highness could and would protect me, I would not come. In this matter no sword can nor shall help; God alone must manage without any human intervention. Therefore, he whose faith is greatest can here grant the most protection. And, as I feel that your Grace's faith is still very weak, I cannot regard you as the man who can protect or save me.

Seeing your Grace desires to know what to do in this emergency, as you seem to feel you have done too little, I answer most humbly that your Grace has already done altogether too much and ought to do nothing at all. For God can brook neither your Highness' care and counsel nor mine. He would have the whole matter left to Him, and to none other. So let your Grace act accordingly.

If your Grace believes this, then you will be in security and peace; if you do not believe it, I do, and I must needs leave your Electoral Grace to be tormented by anxiety, which is the portion of all who do not believe.

Since, then, I decline to follow your Grace's orders, you are innocent in God's sight if I am taken prisoner or killed. In the eyes of the world, your Highness should henceforth act as follows. As Elector you should be obedient to the powers that be, and acknowledge the authority of His Imperial Majesty in your lands and cities, as is only right and proper according to the constitution of the Empire, and not hinder nor oppose the authorities in the event of their imprisoning or slaying me. For no one should oppose the authorities but He who has instituted them; that would be rebellion against God.†

But I hope they will be reasonable, and remember that your Electoral Highness was born in too noble a cradle to be expected to play constable to the likes of me. If they come for me themselves, and your Grace admits them and abides by the Electoral safe-conduct, you will have done your full duty. But should they be so unreasonable as to command your Grace to lay hands on me yourself, I will tell you what to do:— You may believe it or not, but in that case I shall protect your Electoral Grace from injury to body, soul and estate, so far as my cause is concerned. [He means doubtless that he would then give himself up.]

Herewith I commend your Grace to God's grace. We shall presently have more to say to each other, when the necessity arises. I have written these lines

†This position helps us to understand Luther's attitude in the Peasants' revolt; see below, p. 111, and comp. chap. xv.

in great haste, in order that your Grace may not be embarrassed when my return is noised abroad; for if I wish to be a true Christian, I must needs bring comfort rather than injury upon my fellowmen.

I have to do with a very different sort of person from Duke George,—one who knows me well, and with whom I am not unacquainted.† If your Grace only believed, you would see the glory of God [John 11:40]; but as you do not yet believe, you have seen nothing.

To God be love and laud to all eternity: Amen.

Given at Borna, in the house of my escort, Ash Wednesday [March 5], 1522.

Your Electoral Grace's humble servant,

MARTIN LUTHER.

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†He means the devil.—In the last of the famous Wittenberg sermons (see chap. xiv) he says in a similar vein: "I have eaten salt with him once or twice. I know him well, and he knows me well, too."

XIV

A Week of Wonderful Sermons
(1522)

[On his arrival in Wittenberg Luther found the city in an uproar; "Satan had broken into his sheepfold." Carlstadt, a professor at the University, together with other impatient and fanatical spirits, had proceeded to apply Luther's reformatory principles in a revolutionary spirit, confusing non-essentials with essentials, turning the Gospel into a law, disregarding weak consciences, and employing force. The mass was abolished, monks were driven out of the monasteries, a number of priests took wives, images were destroyed, and communion in both kinds was introduced. The aid of the civil authorities was invoked, and various riots resulted. Melanchthon, Luther's vacillating friend (comp. chap. xxiv, 3), was powerless to stem the tide. The Elector, wavering at first and at his wits' end, finally stiffened his back and ordered the former Catholic practice restored. The City-council, in despair, sent for Luther who alone could bring order out of chaos. And Luther was only too glad to come.

Three days after his return, on Invocavit Sunday, March 9, he mounted the pulpit of the City-church and preached for eight days in succession what must have been one of the most remarkable series of sermons in the history of preaching. As a result, the revolution was put down, the people came to their senses, and the fanatics were expelled. It is one of the most notable instances of the power of the spoken word. There follow a few extracts, from the notes of one of the hearers. Although we miss the living voice and personal presence of the preacher, they furnish a fair specimen of Luther's sermon method.—See *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. ii, pp. 387-425.]

[*Of the Word of God as over against human force*]

By the Word of God were the heavens made, the earth and all that is therein. This Word must ac-

complish every reform, and not we poor sinners. In short, I will preach the Word, speak the Word, write the Word; but I will use force upon no man; for faith must come freely and without compulsion. Take my own case in illustration. I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I merely taught, preached and wrote God's Word; that is all I did. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything. If I had had the mind to resort to force, I could have brought great bloodshed upon Germany. At Worms I could have played such a game as would have made the emperor tremble for his safety.† But what would it have come to? Mere fool's-play. I sat still, and left all to the Word.

Pray, what do you suppose are Satan's thoughts when men try to achieve their purpose by force and violence? He leans comfortably back in hell, and "Oh," says he, "what a fine piece of business the fools are up to now." But when we use the Word alone and let it work, that distresses him. For the Word is almighty; it takes captive the heart, and when that is taken, all must come right of itself. We must not drag men out nor draw them in, by the hairs; no one can be driven to heaven with blows.

†He means he could have made common cause with Hutten and his band of knights who, during the Diet, hung like a threatening thunder cloud over the city of Worms.

[*Of Images*]

We have seen that images ought to be abolished when they are worshiped; otherwise not,—although, because of the abuses they give rise to, I wish they were everywhere abolished. For whoever places an image in a church imagines he has performed a service unto God and wrought a good work,—which is downright idolatry. But this, the principal reason for abolishing images, you have passed by, and fastened on the least important reason of all. For there is scarcely anyone who does not understand that yonder crucifix is not his God; his God is in heaven, but that image serves merely as a sign or symbol. But the world is full of that other abuse; for who would place a silver or wooden image in a church unless he thought that by so doing he was rendering God a service? Yet even that is not a sufficient reason for abolishing, burning and destroying all images. For we have to admit that there are still some people who hold to no such wrong opinion, though they are precious few. Therefore, we cannot and ought not to condemn a thing that ministers to the devotions of anyone.

You should rather have taught that images are nothing, that God cares naught for them, that He is not pleased when we make an image for Him, and that we should do better to give a poor man a gold-piece than God a gold image; for He has forbidden the latter but not the former. If men had heard this sort of teaching, that images count for nothing, they would

have ceased of their own accord, and the images would have fallen without uproar or tumult, as they are already beginning to do.

[*Of the Sacrament*]

Although I hold it necessary that the sacrament be received in both kinds [see above, p. 32], according to our Lord's institution, nevertheless this must not be made compulsory or a general law. We must make use of the Word, teach it and preach it. For the result we must look entirely to the Word, and let every one have his free choice in the matter. When that is not done, the sacrament becomes an external observance and sheer hypocrisy, which is the very thing the devil wants. But when the Word is given free course and is not bound to any external observance, it lays hold to-day on this one, and sinks into his heart, to-morrow on another, and so it goes on, taking captive the hearts of men. Thus quietly and soberly it does its work, and no one will know how it has all come about.

I was glad to learn there were some in this city who had begun to receive the sacrament in both kinds [see above, p. 32]. You should have allowed it to remain thus, and not have forced it into a law. But now you rush on pell-mell and force every one to receive it your way. Dear friends, you will never succeed in this manner, and if you will heed me you must give it up. If you do not heed me, no one need drive me

away from here; I shall leave you unbidden, and regret that I ever preached so much as one sermon in this place. The other things could be passed by, but this cannot be passed by. I tell you that none of my enemies who have opposed me up to this time, have brought so much grief upon me as you, my friends.

XV

The Powers That Be

(1523)

[This little writing (its full title is *Secular Government, —To what Extent it is to be Obeyed*) which is given here in a greatly condensed paraphrase, is an important discussion of the principles of government from the Christian point of view, and a declaration of the freedom of conscience. "It is the first ethical defence of government over against the current Roman Catholic conception which traced all authority to the Church. It gave the world a new theory of the State, separated the State from the Church, and made the function of the State the service of its people."—J. J. Schindel in *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. iii. See also L. H. Waring: *The Political Theories of Martin Luther.*]

[1. *Secular Government is Divine*]

Secular law and the temporal sword are firmly established by Scripture and are in the world by God's will and appointment (Rom. 13:1 ff.; 1 Pet. 2:13; Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:14, 23 ff.; Matt. 26:52; Luke 3:14). God has ordained two kingdoms or governments—the spiritual, in which, by the Holy Spirit, men are made Christians and righteous, under the rule of Christ; and the secular, in which wicked and unchristian men are restrained and compelled to keep the peace, outwardly and against their will. These two kingdoms must be sharply distinguished, and both must be permitted to remain—the one to produce piety, the other to preserve outward peace and prevent evildoing. Neither is sufficient in the world without the other.

Though Christians are not under the law of the sword so far as they themselves are concerned, nevertheless they obey the same or administer it, out of love and for the sake of their neighbors. The Christian serves the State just as he performs all other works of love, of which he has no need in himself [comp. above, p. 48f.]. If you ask whether beadles, hangmen, jurists, advocates, and other officers of the law can also be Christians and in a saved state, I reply that, if the State and its sword are a divine service, as was shown above, then all that the State needs in order to wield the sword must likewise be a divine service.

[2. *The Extent of Secular Government*]

The State should not intrude where it has no authority. Its function is to prevent evildoing and maintain outward peace, but not to make men righteous. This can be done by God alone through the reign of Christ in men's souls. The rule of the secular government with its laws extends only over men's bodies and possessions and whatever is external and temporal. But the souls of men God permits no one to rule but Himself alone. No one can be brought to faith by force; for faith is a free work, or rather, it is a work of the Holy Spirit. Any attempt to force men to believe will produce only hypocrisy and lying.

When commanded by the authorities to deliver up their [German] Testaments [to be burned], believers should refuse to give up a single page of them to the tyrants, lest they be delivering Christ to Herod. But if

the books are taken from them by force, and their property and goods with them, Christians should suffer it in patience. Blessed are they if men persecute them for the sake of the Gospel. But the foolish tyrants God Himself will judge.

Not too much must be expected of rulers and princes. We know that, from the beginning of the world, a wise prince has been a rare bird, and a righteous prince a rarer still. They are usually the most arrant fools or the most consummate knaves on earth. If a prince turn out wise and righteous and Christian, it is one of the wonders of the world and a signal mark of God's grace upon his land.†

With heresy and heretics the secular government has nothing to do. That is the business of bishops, not of princes. Heresy can never be stamped out by force; it must be dealt with in a different manner. It must be opposed not with the sword, but with God's Word. If that does not put it down it will never be put down by the secular authorities, though they drown the world in blood. For heresy is a spiritual thing, which no iron can pierce, no fire burn, no water drown. If you would drive out heresy you must seek first of all to pluck it out of the heart. Force cannot do this; all it can accomplish is to strengthen and confirm the heresy. But God's Word enlightens the heart, and then errors and heresies vanish of themselves.

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†To get the full, amazing force of this, note that this treatise was dedicated to a prince,—Duke John of Saxony, the brother of Luther's Elector.

[3. *The Christian Ruler*]†

If anyone desires to be a Christian prince or ruler, let him diligently look to his duty toward God, toward his subjects, toward his councillors, and toward evildoers. His duty toward God consists in relying upon Him with firm confidence, and in praying to Him without ceasing for wisdom and understanding to rule his people well. His duty toward his subjects consists in love and all Christian service. As to his councillors, he should neither despise them nor trust them implicitly. And toward all evildoers he should exercise severity tempered with justice.

Rulers are justified in going to war, provided their purpose is not a selfish one, but the protection and defence of their people, and even then only after having first offered terms of peace to the foe. When an injury cannot be punished without inflicting still greater injury, let the ruler waive his rights, however just. He must not regard the insult or injury done to him so much as the injury others [viz., his own people] will have to suffer in consequence of the punishment he exacts. What have the poor women and children done that they should suffer so cruelly and be made widows and orphans, only that you may avenge yourself on an idle tongue or a wicked hand that has injured or insulted you?‡

†This section forms a striking contrast to Machiavelli's *Prince,* which appeared just ten years later.

‡Luther deals with the whole question of war and the Christian attitude to war, in a little treatise written in 1526, after the Peasants' Revolt—*Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligem Stande sein können*—which is well worthy of careful study.

XVI

The Right of a Christian Congregation to Call Its Own Pastor

(1523)

[The mediaeval church service was a gorgeous pageant in which man elaborately served God; for Luther the service had no meaning apart from the Word of God. "Where the Word of God is," he said, "there is God's house wherein He dwells; and where God dwells, there is His Word; and it is God's house not because of the service we render unto God nor any works that we imagine we are performing for Him, but solely because the Word of God is there, by which God serves us in His house." The first thing necessary, therefore, was that the congregation should have preachers to administer this Word. The following extracts from a little writing composed for a nearby community, show how a congregation can have such preachers. —See *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. iv.]

The certain mark of a Christian congregation is the preaching of the Gospel in its purity.—In this matter not the least regard is to be paid to human law, right, precedent, usage or custom, it matters not whether it be established by pope or emperor, by princes or bishops, whether it be observed by half the world or all the world, whether it be in existence one year or a thousand years. For the soul of man is eternal, and above everything that is temporal.—We conclude, therefore, that where there is a Christian congregation, having the Gospel, this congregation has not only the right and power but also the duty, according to the troth it plighted Christ in baptism, and under pain of forfeiting its salvation, to avoid and flee, to put down

and withdraw itself from, the authority which the bishops, abbots, monasteries, foundations, etc., wield to-day, since it is evident that their teaching and rule are contrary to God and His Word.

But, secondly, since a Christian congregation cannot exist without the Word of God, it follows that it must have teachers or preachers to administer this Word. And forasmuch as, in these last accursed times [Luther believed, like the apostles before him, that the end of the world was near], the bishops and false spiritual rulers neither are nor desire to be such teachers, and will neither give us nor suffer us to have such teachers, and forasmuch as we ought not to expect God to send us down teachers from heaven: therefore we must do as the Scriptures say, and call and ordain, from among ourselves, men who are found fit for this work and whom God has enlightened with understanding and endowed with the necessary gifts.

Every Christian has both the right and the duty to teach and preach God's Word. Now you will say: "But unless he be called, he dare not preach, as you have repeatedly maintained." [Comp. above, p. 200] I answer that it depends upon what sort of people he finds himself among. If he is where there are no Christians, he needs no other call than the fact that he is a Christian, inwardly called and anointed by God. He is in duty bound, by the law of Christian love, to preach the Gospel to such erring heathen or non-Christians, even though no man call him to do so. But when he is among Christians, all of whom have the

same right and power as himself, he ought not to thrust himself forward, but wait until he is called to preach in the stead and by the commission of the rest. Nevertheless, even among Christians, he has the right to arise and teach without being called by men, in case he finds the local preacher to be in error, provided always that this be done decently and in order. If St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:30 prescribes that among Christians, whenever it be necessary, any one should arise to speak, even without a call, how much rather will it be right for an entire congregation to call a man to this office, whenever it is necessary, as it is indeed always necessary, and never more so than now.

To whomever this office of preaching is committed, to him is committed the highest office in the Christian Church. He may then also baptise, say mass, and perform all pastoral acts. Or, if he prefer, he may confine himself to preaching, and leave baptising and other subordinate functions to others, as Christ did (John 4:2), and Paul (1 Cor. 1:17), and all the apostles (Acts 6).

XVII

The New Order of Service

(1523)

[This little treatise, written for the same congregation (at Leisnig) as the preceding, and given here in its entirety, lays down the fundamental principles of the Lutheran service. Later Luther composed his *Formula Missae* (1523) and his *Deutsche Messe* (1526), Latin and German orders of service, respectively, with musical settings, which are the practical working out of the liturgical principles laid down in our little treatise.—For the latest development of these liturgical principles, see the new *Common Service Book* of the Lutheran Church, to be published in 1917.]

The Church service that is now everywhere in use is, like the office of the ministry, of good Christian origin. But as the ministry has been corrupted by the spiritual tyrants, so the service has been spoiled by the hypocrites. And as we do not abolish the ministry but seek to restore it to its rightful estate, so too it is our purpose to do with respect to the service.

Three great abuses have crept into the service. (1) The Word of God has been put to silence, and there has been nothing but reading and chanting in the churches. This is the worst abuse of the three. (2) Because God's Word was kept silent, a multitude of abominable non-Christian lies and fables in saints'-legends, chants and sermons has crept in. (3) Such services have come to be regarded as good works, by which one may merit the grace of God and salvation. In this way faith has perished, and all that men care

for is to make gifts and foundations to the Church, and to become priests, monks and nuns.

Now, in order that these abuses may be removed, it is necessary first of all to know that a Christian congregation ought never to come together unless the Word of God be preached and prayers said, be it never so briefly. As it is said in Psalm 102:22, when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve the Lord, it should be to declare the name of the Lord and His praise. And Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:31, that there should be in the congregation those that prophesy, those that teach, and those that exhort. Hence, unless God's Word is preached, it is better that there should be no singing nor reading nor indeed any coming together at all.

This was the practice of Christians in the days of the apostles. And it should still be our practice today, to meet together for an hour every morning at four or five o'clock, and to have a Scripture lesson read by the schoolboys, priests or whoever may be selected, as is done in our present matin service. This should be done by one or two individuals, or by one or two choirs in turn, as is most convenient.

Thereupon the preacher, or to whomever this duty is assigned, should expound a portion of the Scripture lesson, in order that all the rest may understand, learn and lay the same to heart. The former [the reading of the lesson] Paul calls "speaking in unknown tongues" (1 Cor. 14:27) [Luther regards the speaking with tongues in this passage as a speaking in unknown lan-

guages, and compares with it the reading of the lessons in Latin]: the latter [the expounding of the lesson] he calls "interpreting," "prophesying," or "speaking with the understanding" (1 Cor. 14:19). Unless this latter be done, the reading of the lesson profits the congregation not one whit. That is what they have been doing in the monasteries and foundations up to now—making the walls echo with empty sound.

The lesson should be taken from the Old Testament, by reading one book after another, a chapter or two or half a chapter at a time, until the whole Bible has been read through. If any passage be not understood, it should be passed over and glory given to God. By such daily use of the Scripture Christians should be made thoroughly familiar with the Bible. In former times this method produced many good Christians, virgins and martyrs, and should do the same to-day.

After a half hour or more has been spent in reading and expounding the lesson, the congregation should then give thanks and praise to God and pray that the Word may bear fruit. For this purpose the psalms and certain good responses or antiphons should be used, but briefly, so that all may be over within the hour. If it be desired, a longer time may be devoted to it; but we ought not to overload men's souls and weary them, as the poor beasts of burden in the monastic houses have been doing to themselves.

A similar service should be held at five or six of the evening. And here again the lesson should be taken from the Old Testament books in their order;

the evening lesson from the prophets, as the morning lesson was from Moses and the historical books. But since we have also a New Testament, I would assign the Old Testament to the morning and the New to the evening service, or vice versa. The lesson at the evening service is to be read, expounded, and followed by chants and prayers, just as in the morning. For all depends upon the Word of God, and that it be kept before the people and constantly uplift and refresh the soul, lest it grow weary.

The holding of another such service later in the day, after the evening meal, I leave optional.

If it be not possible for the entire congregation to attend these daily services, yet the priests and scholars should do so, especially those scholars who are expected to become faithful preachers and pastors. They should be admonished to attend of their own free will, not grudgingly or of necessity, and not for temporal or eternal reward, but solely to the glory of God and for the good of their fellowmen.

But beside the daily services for these smaller groups, there should be services for the whole congregation on Sunday, when mass [the chief service; see above, p. 34f.] and vespers should be sung, as we have hitherto been accustomed to do. At each of these services a sermon should be preached to the whole congregation; in the morning on the gospel lesson for the day, in the evening on the epistle lesson. Or, if the preacher deem it profitable, he may also preach on continuous portions of biblical books at either or both services.

If any desire, thereafter, to partake of the sacrament, it should be administered. This can be arranged, according to the time at one's disposal and the number of persons desiring to commune.

All daily masses [see above, p. 34f.] should be abolished; for the Word, not the mass, is the thing. However, if any should desire to commune on a weekday, mass may then be held, as the devotion of the congregation and the time permit; for in this matter one can lay down no hard and fast rule.

The chants for Sunday masses and vespers should be retained, for they are excellent and scriptural; still they may be shortened or added to. But for daily matins and vespers, the pastor and preacher should appoint suitable chants and psalms. They should appoint for each of these services, a psalm, a good responsory or antiphon, and a collect, to be audibly read [as over against the indistinct mumbling of the priest at the altar] and sung after the reading and exposition of the lesson. But the antiphons, responses, collects and lessons for saints' days and festivals of the cross, had better be omitted for a while longer, until they have been purged of the abominable errors they contain.

All saints' days should be done away with, or if there be any with a good Christian legend, they should be observed on the nearest Sunday, after the morning sermon, for the sake of the lessons they teach. I would, however, retain the feasts of the Purification and the Annunciation of Mary [Feb. 2 and March 25]; those of the Assumption and the Nativity of Mary [Aug. 15

and Sept. 8] must also be retained for a while longer, though their chants are not free from error. The feast of John Baptist [June 24] also, is a pure feast [by "pure" he means scriptural]. None of the legends of the apostles is pure, except those of St. Paul; hence the latter may be used on the nearest Sundays, or on the calendar days if one prefer.

Further changes will suggest themselves as time and opportunity present. But the chief thing should be that whatever is done have this one end in view—that the Word be kept before the people and the service be not turned again into empty chatter and noise, as before. It were better to omit everything else than the Word, and nothing better can be done than to proclaim the Word. For all the Scriptures show us that the Word should have free course among Christians, and Christ Himself tells us that one thing is needful, namely, that Mary sit daily at His feet and hear His word (Luke 10:42). This is that good part which is to be chosen, and which shall never be taken away. For it is an eternal Word. All other things must pass away, however careful and troubled Martha may be about them. May God grant us His help: Amen.

XVIII

The First Protestant Hymn Book

(1524)

[Luther was ever a friend of song. He was himself gifted with a clear tenor voice and was fond of playing the lute. "Music," he declared, "is one of the most precious gifts of God; I rank it next in order to theology." One of his greatest reformatory acts was the giving to the people a part in the service, especially by means of the congregational hymn. In 1524 he persuaded the elector to send his choir-master Johann Walther (1496-1570) to Wittenberg, to help Luther with the musical portion of his task. Together they prepared the first Protestant hymnal containing words and full musical settings,—the *Geistliche Gesangbüchlein,* containing thirty-two German hymns and five Latin chants. Luther wrote the following preface for the little book.]

Every Christian knows, I daresay, that the singing of sacred songs is good and well-pleasing to God. The example of the Old Testament prophets and kings who praised God with hymns and the playing on instruments, and the ancient practice of the Christian Church are familiar to all. Moreover, St. Paul ordains this practice in 1 Cor. 14:15, and exhorts the Colossians (Col. 3:16) to sing psalms and spiritual songs in their hearts to the Lord, in order that thereby the Word of God and Christian truth may every way [i. e., not only by means of preaching and teaching] be taught and practiced.

Therefore, to make a beginning and as an incentive to other and more competent hands, I have, together with others, collected here a number of spiritual songs,

in order to teach and spread abroad the holy Gospel, which by the grace of God is again risen upon us. Thus we, too, may be able to boast as Moses did, that the Lord is our strength and our song (Ex. 15:2), and that we know nothing to sing or to say save Jesus Christ our Saviour, as Paul writes in 1 Cor. 2:2.

These hymns are arranged for four voices, for the sake of the youth, who ought indeed to be trained in music as well as in the other pure arts, in order that they may be weaned away from the love ditties and worldly songs and learn something wholesome in their stead. For we owe it to our young folk to make the good as attractive as possible. [Compare below, p. 133.]

I am not of the opinion that all arts are to be suppressed and destroyed by the Gospel, as divers superspiritual ones would have it. On the contrary, I should like to see all arts, and particularly music, in the service of Him who is their author and giver. I therefore commend this matter to all good Christians, and pray them, if God have granted them better gifts than ours or as good, to lend their aid. There is no need to tell why this is necessary; all the world is, alas! so lax and indifferent when it come to the training of the young [see chap. xx]. May God grant us His grace: Amen.

XIX

A Children's Hymn for Christmastide

(1534)

[In the first Protestant hymn book (chap. xviii) twenty-four of the thirty-two hymns were by Luther. Altogether we have thirty-seven hymns from his pen, about one-half of which are still in use. He is rightly regarded as the father of the evangelical *Kirchenlied.* He was a poet by nature, and the needs of the Church formed the occasion that set him singing. His hymns are characteristic of him: there is nothing sentimental or "sweet" about them, nothing here of "art for art's sake," nothing of the individualistic, though all is intensely personal. They are distinctively hymns for the worshiping congregation singing the great verities of the Christian religion as they are apprehended by a living and joyous faith. Their range is very wide—from the wind and fire and earthquake of *A Mighty Fortress* to the still small voice of *From Far-off Heaven.*

The latter as perhaps the tenderest, and certainly the most poetical, of all his hymns, is given below. Based in its opening stanza on an old traveler's song, it becomes, as its structure shows, a little nativity-play in lyric form, to be acted by the children on Christmas Eve. Perhaps Luther himself, or it may be the trusty but somewhat weak-minded servant of the Luther House, Wolf Sieberger (see chap. xxvi), played the role of the angel. What here follows is an entirely imaginary scene.]

It is Christmas Eve in the Black Cloister. Outside, the snow is driving down the street and drifting into doorways and window-openings. There will be work to-morrow for Wolf.

Within, in the great living room above stairs, the household is gathered. There is the *Herr Doktor* himself, lightly strumming on his lute; *Frau Käthe* with

her Baby Paul in arms; *Muhme Lene,* her aged aunt; and a number of University students, boarders in the Luther House and too poor to spend the holidays in their distant homes. There is also the great Philip Melanchthon, small in stature and "weazened like St. Paul," yet the Teacher of all Germany; Dr. Bugenhagen, the worthy pastor of the Luther family; Justus Jonas with his wife (his "rib", as Luther playfully called her) and Nicholas Amsdorf, the crusty bachelor, with a few other visitors and neighbors.

In one corner, opposite the great green-tiled stove, stands the German Christmas-tree, glowing in the light of its candles. Underneath it is the traditional manger scene. In another corner the children are crouching, hidden in the shadows, "making believe" they are the shepherds watching in the field by night. There is Hans, the eldest, the little songster of whom his father once made a fine parable. This is what he said:—

"When I am at my writing-table hard at work, *Hänschen* sits on the floor and lustily sings a little song. At times he sings so loud it disturbs me, and I have to scold him a little. He does not therefore cease his singing, but lowers his voice and hums his song right softly, with many a scared look in my direction. That is exactly how God means us to do when He says, 'Rejoice with trembling!' "—Hans is also the blessed boy to whom his father sent that most beautiful of all letters that ever gladdened a four-year-old's heart (chap. xxiv, 2).

There is Hans's shy sweet sister Magdalena, her father's favorite, whose early death in the thirteenth year of her maidenhood was to break his heart; little Martin, Junior; also Hans's playmates, Phil Melanchthon and Justy Jonas, who shared in the glory of the famous letter, for did not the man say that they, too, might come into the wonderful garden?

The signal is finally given and clumsy Wolf, who has had great trouble squeezing himself into his angel's costume, now bursts upon the scene in all his glory, singing to Luther's soft accompaniment:—

"From far-off Heaven I come to you,
I bring good tidings, strange and new;
Such wondrous things have I to tell,
I pray you mark my message well.

"To you this day a Child is born,
Son of a Maiden fair as morn,—
Lord Christ, who would your Saviour be,
From all your sins to set you free.

"Now mark the sign: A cattle shed,
And in the shed a manger bed,
And in the bed a Baby laid,—
By Him all heaven and earth was made."

With the first note the children have risen and now stand in a solemn row, with clasped hands and shining faces, singing:—

"The shepherds run to Bethlehem;
Let us rejoicing go with them,
To see what God to us hath given,
Who sends this day His Son from heaven."

Then, suiting the action to the word, they approach the manger-crib before the Christmas-tree, and as they imagine the shepherds to have done, fall upon their knees in adoration and sing one after the other their little welcome-songs. Hans, a trifle pompous as becomes the eldest, chants in his clearest voice the opening stave:—

"All hail, Thou noble Guest, this morn,
Whose love did not the sinner scorn;
In my distress Thou com'st to me;
What thanks shall I return to Thee?"

After him, his sister *Lenchen* timidly takes up the strain:—

"Were earth a thousand times more fair,
Inlaid with gold and jewels rare,
It yet were all too bare to be
A narrow cradle, Christ, for Thee."

Last comes little Martin, who is not yet four. His mother has had a hard time teaching him his "piece," and he looks to her now for her smile of guidance before setting out. He touches only very lightly on the

words, but roars the tune all the louder, meanwhile glancing disdainfully at his little brother Paul in mother's lap, who cannot sing:—

"Ah, dearest Jesu, Holy Child,
Make Thee a bed all undefiled
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee."

Then the whole company rises and with folded hands and faces raised toward heaven, joins in the closing chorus, Dr. Luther's tenor sailing high over all their voices:—

"Praise God upon His heavenly throne,
Who gave to us His only Son;
For this His hosts on joyful wing
A glad New Year of mercy sing."

And then the candles are blown out and the children troop off to bed.

XX

Christian Schools for Boys and Girls

(1524)

[Under the influence of the rediscovered Gospel many of the monasteries were vacated and the monastic schools closed. Luther realized the absolute necessity of a proper training of the young, if the life of Church and State was to prosper. Hence he addressed an eloquent plea "to all councilmen of German cities," urging them "to establish and support Christian schools." It is interesting to note the firm position he takes in favor of a classical education over against what we now call vocational training, also that he advocates schools for girls.—Comp. Painter: *Luther on Education,* and article *Luther* in Encyclopedia of Education.]

In the first place, we are at present experiencing how all over Germany the schools are permitted to decline. . . . . And since the carnally minded populace see that they are no longer compelled or no longer able to turn their sons and daughters out of their own house and home and drive them into monasteries and foundations, no one will any longer let his children study. "Tell us," they say, "why should we let them study, if they are not to become priests or monks or nuns? They had better learn how to support themselves."

I therefore pray you, my dear lords and friends, for God's sake and the poor youths', not to take this matter lightly, as so many are doing, who do not see through the wiles of the prince of this world. For it is a most important and serious matter, upon which much de-

pends for Christ and all the world,—namely, that we help and provide for our youth. By helping them we shall be helping ourselves and all men. I pray you to reflect that we must with deep Christian seriousness oppose this subtle, secret, crafty attempt of the devil. Dear lords, what vast sums must needs be spent every year for the equipment of soldiers, the construction of roads and dams, and innumerable similar items, in order that a city may enjoy temporal peace and prosperity. Why should not at least as much be devoted to the needs of the youth, so that one or two competent men could be engaged to teach school?

Moreover, every citizen ought to be moved by the following consideration. Formerly he was compelled to give up great sums of money for indulgences, masses, vigils, foundations, testaments, anniversaries, mendicants, sodalities, pilgrimages, and all the other vermin; but now he is free by God's grace from all this robbing and giving. If, out of gratitude to God, he were to give up only a portion of what he saves in this way, for schools in which to train the poor children, what a good investment that would be! If the light of the Gospel had not dawned upon him and delivered him, he would have to give up ten times more to the above mentioned robbers forever and without any return. Let this be the first reason, dear lords, for establishing schools—we ought thereby to oppose the devil, our most insidious and crafty foe.

The second reason is found in the words of St. Paul,—that we receive not the grace of God in vain,

nor fail to redeem the time (2 Cor. 6:1, 2). For Almighty God has indeed graciously visited us Germans and granted us a right golden year. We have at present most able and learned young men, well versed in the classics and the sciences, who could do much good if we made use of them as instructors of the young. Since God has so richly blessed us and given us so many young men able to teach and train our youth, we ought not to despise His grace and let Him knock at our door in vain. If we suffer Him to pass by, who will bring Him back?

Let us call to mind our former misery and the darkness in which we sat. Germany, I trow, has never before heard so much of God's Word. If we permit it to go by without thanks and praise, let us beware lest we suffer a more cruel darkness and plague. Dear Germans, buy while the fair is before your door; make hay while the sun shines; use God's grace and Word while they are nigh. For know this,—God's Word and grace are very like a driving shower, that returns not again. It came to the Jews, but it passed over; now they have nothing. Paul brought it to Greece, but it passed over; now they have the Turk. Rome and the Latin Church had it, too; it passed over; now they have the pope. And you Germans need not think you will have it for ever. Your ingratitude and contempt will not suffer it to remain. Therefore, take and hold fast, whoever can; idle hands cannot but have a lean harvest.

The third reason is the most important of all. It is God's command, so often enjoined by Moses, that parents instruct their children (Deut. 21:18ff.; 32:7). "Ah," you say, "but that is said to parents; what business is it of councilmen and magistrates?" Very true; yet if the parents neglect it, who is to see to it? Or, because the parents will not do it, should it remain altogether undone and the children be neglected? In that case, could the magistrates and councilmen excuse themselves by saying it is no business of theirs? There are many reasons why parents do not discharge this their duty. [He mentions particularly: lack of willingness, lack of ability, lack of time.]

Therefore, it becomes the duty of the magistrates and councilmen to watch over the youth with unremitting care and diligence. For since the city with all its interests—property, honor, safety and life—is committed to their faithful keeping, they would not be dealing honorably before God or man if they failed to seek the prosperity and improvement of the city day and night with all their powers. Now the prosperity of a city consists not in heaping up great treasure, building solid walls and stately houses, or multiplying artillery and munitions of war; but a city's best and richest prosperity, strength and safety consist in the multitude of its able, learned, intelligent, honorable and well-bred citizens. Such men will bring together treasure and all goods, defend them, and put them to a good use.

"Well," you say again, "even though we must have schools, what is the good of learning Latin, Greek and Hebrew and the other liberal arts [see below, p. 110]? We should still be able to read the Bible and God's Word in German, and that is sufficient for our salvation." I answer: Alas! I know full well that we Germans must be and remain beasts and dumb cattle, as our neighbors in other countries deservedly call us. But is it not strange that we never once ask: "What is the good of silks, wines, spices, and all the other strange foreign wares?" For we have in German lands enough wine, grain, wool, flax, wood and stone for all our needs, and the very choicest of them for luxury and adornment. The arts and languages, which are not only not harmful to us but a far greater adornment, glory and benefit, both for the understanding of the holy Scriptures and the conduct of secular government,—these we despise; but we cannot do without the foreign wares, which we do not need and which reduce us to our last penny! Are we not rightly styled German fools and beasts?

If there were no other use for the languages, this alone might well rejoice and move us—namely, that they are so fine and noble a gift of God, wherewith He is even now richly visiting and endowing us Germans more than almost any other land.

Therefore, my beloved Germans, let us open our eyes, thank God for this precious treasure, and hold fast to it, lest it be withdrawn from us and the devil have his evil will. For, although the Gospel has come

and daily comes by the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came by means of language, by which it was also spread abroad and increased, and by which it must be preserved.

In proportion, then, as we love the Gospel, let us look well to the languages. For it was not in vain that God had His Scriptures set down in these two languages and none other—the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek. The languages that God did not despise but chose above all others for His Word, we too ought to honor above all others. . . . . And let us remember that we shall not long preserve the Gospel without the languages. For they are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which one carries this jewel; they are the vessel in which one holds this wine; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and, as the Gospel itself says, they are the baskets in which one has the loaves and fishes and the broken meat.

"But," say you, "who can spare his children for so long a time, and have them all educated and turned into gentlemen? There is work for them to do at home." I reply: It is not my intention that such schools should be established as we have hitherto had, in which a lad would sit over his Latin schoolbooks for twenty or thirty years without learning a thing. Times have changed, and we are living in a different world to-day. My plan is, to let the boys go to school one or two hours a day, and spend the remainder of the time working at home, learning a trade or doing

whatever else the parents wish them to do; so that both these things may go hand in hand, as long as the boys are young and have the time. They spend ten times as much time playing at marbles and ball or racing and romping, as they would in this way spend at school.

In the same way a girl will surely have time enough to go to school one hour a day and yet attend to all her household duties. She sleeps or dances or plays away more time than that. What is lacking is not the time, but the serious purpose to train the youth and to serve the world by furnishing it with well-bred men and women. Of course, the devil much prefers blockheads and ne'er-do-wells, lest it go too well with men upon earth.

Finally, all who are concerned that such schools and languages be established and maintained in German lands may well bear in mind that no effort or expense should be spared to found good libraries, especially in the larger cities that can well afford them. For, if the Gospel and all knowledge are to continue among us, they must needs be contained and held fast in books and writings. . . . . But I advise against an indiscriminate assembling together of all sorts of books, and against looking merely to their number and quantity. I would have the books chosen with great care.

Such a library should contain, first of all, the Sacred Scriptures in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German and any other language. Then the best and

oldest commentaries that are to be found, in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Then such books as aid one in acquiring language—the poets and orators, whether heathen or Christian, Greek or Latin; for from them one must needs learn grammar. Then books of the liberal arts [i. e., grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy] and the other arts. Lastly, books of jurisprudence and medicine, although here, too, it is necessary to choose well. Among the chief contents of a library should be chronicles and histories, in all languages; for they are of wondrous value in helping one to understand and control the events of this world and to note the wonderful works of God.

XXI

Invitation to a Wedding Feast
(1525)

[Luther's attitude in the Peasants' Uprising of 1524-5 has been much criticized, not always in fairness. It is not true that the Reformation was the cause of the peasants' revolt; there had been half a dozen such uprisings on a smaller scale before Luther appeared on the scene. Nor is it correct, on the other hand, to deny all connection between the two; "when one house is blown up, its neighbor is sure to be shaken, especially if both stand upon the same foundation." The religious liberty which Luther taught (comp. chap. vii), distorted and applied to the political and economic sphere by demagogues such as the Wittenberg radicals (comp. chap. xiv) and others, fell like a spark into the tinder of the peasants' age-long grievances.

Luther sympathized at first with the peasants in their just demands, and wrote a little book on the subject in which he took both lords and peasants severely to task and advocated some sort of arbitration. But when the peasants resorted to violence and marched plundering and murdering through Germany, he took a firm stand for law and order and in his vehement pamphlet, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of the Peasants,* advocated the most extreme measures against the rebels (comp. p. 76). This cost him many friends, as he complains in the beginning of the following letter; but it saved the cause of the Reformation from being drawn into a social and economic movement in which it must inevitably have gone under.

It was characteristic of him that he chose this time above all others to take a step which was calculated to make his "mad and stupid" opponents "madder and stupider" still. On June 13, 1525, he was quietly married by his pastor Bugenhagen to the escaped nun Katherine von Bora (see p. 152). She proved to be a loving and capable helpmate and manager. God blessed them with six children. Luther once said that he would not change his Katie for France and Venice—"because God has given her to me, and other women have much worse faults than she has; she is true to me and a good mother to my children."—Comp. Endlich: *Katharine von Bora.*]

To the worshipful, learned, honorable and wise Dr. John Rühl, John Thür and Caspar Müller, councillors.†

Grace and peace in Christ.

Dear sirs and friends:—What a hullabaloo I have raised by my little book against the peasants! Now all the good things God has wrought by me for the world are clean forgot. Nobles, priests and peasants—all are turned against me and threaten me with death. Well then, since they are so mad and stupid as to seek my life, it behooves me to set my house in order, so that before I die I may be found in the estate ordained of God, and rid of the last vestige of my former papistical life. That will make them madder and stupider still, and shall serve as my last farewell. For I have a foreboding myself that God will ere long call me home.

Therefore, in deference to my father's wish, I have taken unto myself a wife, and lest evil tongues should prevent it, I have gone about it in great haste. It is my intention to give a little wedding feast on the Tuesday next after St. John Baptist [June 24; the Tuesday after was the 27th]. I did not want to do this without letting you know, as my dear friends, and I pray that you will come and help drink our healths.

Conditions being as they are in our land at present [he refers to the revolt of the peasants and the consequent necessity of public officials remaining at their

†Citizens of his former home, Mansfeld; Rühl was Luther's brother-in-law.

post of duty], I have not the heart to send you a formal invitation to be present. But if you could manage and would do me the favor to come, along with my dear father and mother, you may judge for yourselves how extraordinarily it would please me. I should be glad, too, if you brought any other good friends with you; only please let me know about this by return messenger.†

I would also have written to my gracious lords, Counts Gebhard and Albert, but did not venture, for their Graces have other things to attend to.‡ But if you think it proper for me to invite them, please give me your advice. God bless you: Amen.

MARTIN LUTHER.

Wittenberg, Thursday after Trinity [June 15], 1525.

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†This last clause is doubtless due to Katie's foresight.—The three Mansfeld friends accepted the invitation; Rühl brought a great surprise in the form of a wedding gift of twenty gulden in gold, from Luther's old enemy Albrecht of Mayence (comp. chap. xxvii). This Luther refused to accept, but his more thrifty housewife managed to keep it without her husband's knowledge.

‡Their Graces did not have other things to attend to when they invited the aged Luther to adjust a quarrel between them, in the course of which he met his death (see chap. xxviii).

XXII

Preface to the Small Catechism
(1529)

[From the very first Luther was deeply interested in the traditional catechetical material of the Church—especially the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. He frequently expounded these parts before his congregation in catechism sermons during the years 1516-1529, up to the very time his catechisms were written. Portions of these expositions were published by him from time to time; we can now see that they were little sketches or studies preliminary to the composition of the Catechism proper (comp. chap. iv). In 1520 there appeared his *Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer* —one of his most beautiful writings and an important forerunner of his catechisms. This was translated and published in England as Marshall's *Goodly Primer* (1534-5) and thus became the first evangelical catechism in the English language. (Comp. *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. ii, pp. 351-384.) All this time the material was falling into definite shape in his mind, until finally the saddening experiences of the Saxon Visitation in 1527-28 furnished the external impetus, and the two catechisms were composed very early in 1529, the Small Catechism during a pause in the composition of the Large. The Small Catechism is the best single piece of work Luther ever did, as to both form and substance; it is as popular as *Mother Goose,* as profound as Calvin's *Institutes.* It was not published first in book form but on large charts (*Tafeln*), to be hung in churches, schoolrooms and homes. It has been translated into many languages, among others by the Swedish missionary John Campanius into the dialect of the Delaware Indians (1648, but not published until 1696). In 1580 it was incorporated in the "Book of Concord", the collection of the confessions of the Lutheran Church, among which it holds a place similar to that of the Apostles' Creed among the creeds of Christendom. Besides the Small Catechism, another of Luther's writings has become a confession of the Church, *viz.,* his *Schmalkald Articles,* written in 1537. This is so strong an indictment of the papacy that when the pacific Melanchthon signed it he did so only with an ex-

plicit proviso.—On the Small Catechism see Prof. M. Reu: *Katechetik* (Waverly, Ia.: 1915) and article by the same, on "The Significance of Luther's Small Catechism," in *Lutheran Church Review,* vol. xxxiii, p. 296 ff. (1914).]

The wretched and deplorable conditions which I discovered during my recent visitation have impelled me to put the Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this brief and simple form. Great God, what misery I beheld! The common people, especially in the villages, have no knowledge whatever of Christian truth, and many of the pastors are, alas! too ignorant and incompetent to instruct them. Nevertheless, they are all supposed to bear the sacred name of Christ, to be baptised, and to partake of the holy Sacrament. Yet they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed or the Ten Commandments, and they live like irrational beasts and swine. And now that the Gospel has come to them, they have learned to perfection how to abuse their Christian liberty!

Wherefore I beseech you in the name of God, my beloved brethren who are pastors or preachers, to give yourselves with your whole heart to the duties of your office, to have compassion on the people committed to your charge, and to assist us in inculcating the Catechism [i.e., the Christian doctrine], especially in the young. If any of you have no better way of their own [comp. p. 96], I beseech them to adopt the explanations found on these charts [see introduction, p. 114] and to teach them, word for word, to their people.

Please note, in the first place, that the preacher should be at great pains to avoid any changes or variations in the text and wording of the several parts. Let him keep to the same form year in and year out. For the simple youth must be given a fixed form of words to learn, or they will become confused. They should, first of all, be drilled in the text of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, until they have committed it to memory, word for word.

But if any refuse to learn this, they should be plainly told that they deny Christ and are not Christians. They should not be admitted to the Lord's Table, stand as sponsors in Baptism, nor enjoy any of our Christian privileges, but should be sent back to the pope and his agents, and to Satan himself besides. Moreover, their parents and employers should refuse to furnish them food and drink, and notify them that the government was disposed to banish from the country all persons of such rude and intractable character.

Secondly, when they have become familiar with the text, they should also be taught the explanation, so that they may know the meaning of the words they have learned. Here, again, you may use the explanations given on the charts, or any others you may prefer; only see to it that you do not change a single syllable of the form which you have adopted. And take sufficient time for each part.

Thirdly, after they have learned this Short Catechism, take up also the Large Catechism with them,

and give them the fuller explanations contained therein.

Finally, since the people have been delivered from the tyranny of the pope, they refuse to come to the Lord's Supper and treat it with contempt. Now we ought to force no one to believe or to come to the Lord's Supper, nor ought we to make laws concerning the time and place for its reception. But we ought to preach in such a way that they will feel themselves driven without any law, and will come and compel us pastors to administer the sacrament to them. We can accomplish this, if we tell them it is much to be feared that whoever does not desire to commune at least from one to four times a year, despises the sacrament and is no Christian; just as he is not a Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel. For Christ did not say, "This omit or despise!" but, "This do, as oft as ye drink it." He emphatically desires it to be done, and by no means to be neglected or despised; for He says, "This *do*!"

Therefore, ye pastors and preachers, give earnest thought to these matters. Our office has become a very different one from what it was under the pope; it is a serious thing now, and a salutary. Consequently, it entails far greater cares and burdens, dangers and temptations, with small reward and gratitude from the world. But Christ Himself will be our reward, if we but do our work faithfully. In this may the Father of all grace help us, to whom be praise and thanksgiving for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord: Amen.

XXIII

A Loving Son to His Sick Father

(1530)

[Luther's father, Hans Luther, died May 29, 1530, after a lingering illness, during which his famous son sent him this affectionate and comforting letter. After the news of his father's death reached Luther at Coburg, his private secretary, Veit Dietrich (see chap. xxiv, 1), wrote to Frau Käthe: "Dear lady, pray don't worry about the Doctor. He is, thank God, right hale and hearty, and although his father's death was a sore blow to him, he ceased mourning over it after two days. When he read Reinecke's letter he said to me 'My father is dead.' Then he took his Psalter (see chap. xi) and went to his room, and wept so sore he was unable to work for two days. Since then he has not given way to his grief any more."—Luther's mother survived her husband by only a little over a year.]

To my dear father, Hans Luther, burgher of Mansfeld.

Grace and peace in Christ our Saviour!

Dear Father, brother Jacob has written saying you were seriously ill. I am very anxious about you, the weather is so unhealthful just now and dangers lurk on every hand. Although God has given you a hardy constitution and hitherto blessed you with good health, still your advanced age fills me with concern. I should have been glad to come to you, had I not been dissuaded by my friends from tempting God by running into danger; you know how deeply interested both lords and peasants are in my welfare [comp. chap. xxi]. I might be able to get to you, but I should never return home alive.

It would be a great joy to us if my mother and you could find it possible to come here. My Käthe and all of us ask this with tears. We would nurse you tenderly. I have sent Cyriac [Kaufmann, a nephew of Luther, studying at Wittenberg since 1529; comp. chap. xxiv, 1. He was the bearer of this letter] to see if you are able to make the journey. For, whatever the outcome of your illness, I should like to be near you and cherish you with filial affection, to show my gratitude to God and to you, according to the Fourth Commandment.

Meanwhile I pray the Father who has given you, my father, to me, that He would strengthen you according to the abundance of His grace, and enlighten and keep you through His Spirit, so that you may with joy and gratitude discern the blessed Gospel of His Son our Lord, to which you have been brought by His grace out of the former darkness and error; and I am confident that He who has begun His good work in you will preserve and perfect it unto Christ's joyous appearing. For He has even now set this seal to your faith, that He has brought much shame, contempt, enmity and danger upon you for my sake. These are the true marks of our likeness to Christ, as St. Paul says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" [Rom. 8:29].

So remember in your weakness that we have a faithful Advocate with the Father, who has destroyed sin and death for us, and now sits in heaven with the angels, looking down upon us and waiting for us, so

that when our hour comes to leave this world we need have no fear, His power over sin and death being so complete that they can do us no harm. Moreover He is so good and kind that He cannot leave us nor forsake us. We need only call upon Him, nothing doubting but that He will hear us according to His promise. For He who cannot lie has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" [Matt. 7:7]; and again it is said [Acts 2:21], "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." And the whole Psalter is full of such precious promises, especially Psalm 91, which is particularly appropriate for all sick persons.

I write this because of your illness which fills me with concern, for no one knows when his last hour may come. For I would be a partaker of your faith, conflict, consolation, and gratitude to God for His Holy Word, which he has so richly and abundantly bestowed upon us at this time.

But if it be His divine will not to transplant you to that better life, but to let you remain a little longer with us in this vale of sorrows, He will also grant you grace to accept your lot in a willing and obedient spirit. For this cursed life is truly a vale of tears, where the longer one lives the more sin, wickedness and misery one sees. There is no end until we are under ground; then they will let us sleep in peace in Jesus until He comes and grants us a joyful awaking! Amen.

Herewith I commend you to Him who loves you better than you love yourself, having paid the penalty for your sins with His own blood, so that you need have no more anxiety. Cast your cares upon Him, He shall bring it to pass; nay, He has already brought it to pass better than we shall ever comprehend. May this dear Saviour abide with you, so that we may meet again with joy,—God grant even here; if not, then yonder. For we believe without any doubt that we shall shortly meet again in Christ, as the departure from this life is a much smaller thing before God than if I left you in Mansfeld to come back here, or if you said farewell to me here in Wittenberg to return home to Mansfeld. It is only a matter of a short hour's slumber, then all shall be changed.

I am sure your pastors render you faithful service in these matters, so that my chatter is altogether unnecessary; and yet I could not refrain from apologizing for my bodily absence, which God knows is a sore trial to me. My Käthe, little Hans, Lenchen, Aunt Lena, and the whole household send greetings to you and all pray fervently for you. Give my love to my dear mother and all the relations. The grace and power of God be and abide with you alway: Amen.†

Your affectionate son,
MARTINUS LUTHER.

Wittenberg, 15 February, 1530.

†When his pastor read this letter to Hans Luther and asked him whether he believed that its contents were true, —"Why," said the old man, "I'd be a rogue if I didn't."

XXIV

A Sheaf of Letters from "The Wilderness"

(1530)

["The Wilderness" is the playful name Luther gave to Coburg castle, where he spent almost as long an enforced exile as at the Wartburg (from April 23 to October 4). It was during the sessions of the important Diet at Augsburg, which he being under the ban was not allowed to attend. Those were times that tried men's souls, when the fate of the evangelical cause trembled in the balance.—The letters here given reflect various moods of the period. We have the delightful fantasy of the congress of birds in the Coburg woods (1); the letter to little Jack Luther (see chap. xix), a perfect child's classic (2); the tonic letter to the Hamlet-like Melanchthon (3), and the beautiful description of the well-known Luther coat of arms (4).]

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(1) *To His Companions at Table in Wittenberg*

(April 22, 1530)

[He means by them, besides the members of his own family with the servants, especially the student boarders and others to whom he used to discourse during meals, talking on all things in heaven and earth. A number of these persons played Boswell to their master and jotted down his familiar discourse, which was later published as the *Table Talk,* a delightful but not too reliable collection.—See Smith and Gallinger: *Conversations with Luther.*]

Grace and peace in Christ!

My dear sirs and friends,—I received your letter telling me how you all are getting along. In reply let me tell you how things are with us. Although we—Master Veit [Dietrich, his secretary], Cyriac [Kaufmann, his nephew, see above, p. 119] and I—

are not going to the Diet at Augsburg, we have got into the midst of a diet of quite another sort.

There is a thicket just below our window, as large as a small forest, where the daws and crows are holding a diet of their own. Such a running to and fro is there, and such screaming day and night without end, as though one and all were stark staring mad and drunken; young and old crying and chattering together, that I wonder they are not hoarse and out of breath. I should like to know whether there are any of these knights and nobles left with you at Wittenberg, for methinks they have come together here from all parts of the earth.

I have not as yet laid eyes on their Emperor, but the courtiers and grandees are all the while strutting and prancing about in full sight, all dressed alike very simply in black, with grey eyes, and all singing the same song, with pleasant variation of young and old, of small and great. They pay no heed to lofty castle or hall, for their hall is vaulted by the beautiful canopy of heaven, the floor beneath them is the broad expanse of fields inlaid with green branches of trees, and the walls of their mansion reach to the ends of the earth. They are independent also of horses and armor, for they have feathered wheels on which to escape beyond the reach of guns.

They are high and mighty lords, but what they are deliberating about is more than I know. From what I can make out through an interpreter, they seem to be planning a mighty onslaught on wheat, barley,

oats, malt, and every other sort of grain. Many a knight will there win his spurs with deeds of derring-do.

So here we sit at our diet, and take much pleasure watching the gay life of song led by the princes and the rest of the imperial estates. It gives us particular pleasure to see their knights prancing about, whetting their bills and swinging their weapons, hoping to win a glorious victory over the grain. We wish them all manner of success—that the whole crew may be spit on a hedge-stake!

I cannot help fancying it is the sophists and papists I see before me, with their preaching and writing, whose melodious voices I hear, and perceive what exceeding useful folk they are, who consume all the fruits of the earth and caw and chatter to while away the time.

To-day we heard the first nightingale. They would not trust our April hitherto, though the weather has been splendid, with no rain at all except a light sprinkle yesterday. I suppose it has been different up your way. Good-bye, and see well to the house.

MARTIN LUTHER.

From the Diet of the malt-destroying Turks, April 22, 1530.

(2) *To Little Hans*

(June 19, 1530)

[Hans, named for his grandfather, was Luther's eldest child. Shortly after his birth Luther wrote to Spalatin (comp. chap. ix, 1): "With the Lord's blessing my good

wife has borne me a son, and by the grace of God I am a father. Pray Christ to guard my little boy against Satan, who will certainly leave no stone unturned to strike at me through my child, if God permit him to do so. When are you coming to see us again? I have planted a garden and dug a well, and both are doing famously. So come, and we will crown you with garlands of lilies and roses" (June 17, 1526).

Hans was four years old when his wonderful letter arrived, and had a right to feel quite a man when his mother read it to him. Just before Luther's return from Coburg he sent his little son word through his mother that he had a fine big book for him, made all of sugar, which cousin Cyriac (comp. 1) had brought from Nuremberg, out of the beautiful garden about which Luther had written.

In his *Table Talk* (comp. 1) Luther refers to a similar letter by bishop Hilary (366), who wrote, in exile, to his little daughter telling her to be good and learn to say her prayers, and how he had been to see a rich man who promised, if she was a good girl, to make her a present of a golden dress. "Thus sweetly and in childlike fashion," remarks Luther, who did the same, "the good father plays with his tiny daughter by letter."]

Grace and peace in Christ, my dear little son.

I am very happy indeed to hear that you are so diligently studying and saying your prayers. Continue to do so, my little boy, and when I come home I will bring you something pretty from the Fair.†

I know a beautiful garden, where there are crowds of children, all dressed up in golden jackets. They pick up big apples under the trees, also pears, cherries, and purple plums and yellow plums, and they sing and skip about and have a jolly time. They also have

†He always brought along something for the children. From Torgau he writes to his wife in 1532: "Though the fair is on, I can't find anything in this city for the children. In case I shouldn't be able to bring anything along, be sure to have something ready for me at home."

pretty ponies with golden reins and silver saddles. I asked the man to whom the garden belonged, whose children they were. He said: "These are the children who love to pray and learn their lessons and are good." Then I said to him: "Dear man, I, too, have a son, his name is little Jack Luther; mightn't he also come into the garden, and eat such fine apples and pears, and ride on these pretty ponies, and play with the children?" "If he loves to pray and study, and is good," said the man, "he may, and Lippus and Jost, too [the sons of Melanchthon and Justus Jonas, playmates of Hans; comp. chap. xix]; and when they come they shall all have whistles and drums and lutes and every sort of string instrument, and dance, and shoot with little cross-bows." And he showed me a beautiful lawn in the garden, made ready for dancing, with golden whistles and drums and little silver cross-bows hanging all about.

But as it was early, and the children had not yet breakfasted, I could not wait to see the dance. So I said to the man: "My dear sir, I must hurry away now and write all this to my dear little Hans, and tell him always to pray and study well and be good, so that he too may come into this garden. But he has an Auntie Lena [Magdalena von Bora, Frau Käthe's maiden aunt, who lived with them], whom he must bring along." "That he can," said the man; "go and write him about it."

So, dear little Jackie, only learn your lessons and pray, and tell Lippus and Jost to do the same; then

you will all get into the garden together. Herewith I commend you to the Almighty. Give Auntie Lena my love and a hearty smack for me.

Your loving father,
MARTINUS LUTHER.

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(3) *To Philip Melanchthon*
(June 29, 1530)

[The Augsburg Confession, written by Melanchthon, was presented before the Diet on June 25, and the following day Melanchthon sent a copy to Luther, with whom he kept in touch during its preparation. Melanchthon was of a timid, peace-loving nature and prone to make too many concessions. It was Luther's stronger personality and sturdier faith that steadied him. After Luther's death, Melanchthon became more and more of a reed and plunged the Protestant cause into great dissension. The following letter is a good specimen of Luther's tonic treatment of his friend.—Comp. J. W. Richard: *Philip Melanchthon, the Protestant Preceptor of Germany;* and J. L. Neve: *The Augsburg Confession.*]

I have received your *Apology* [the Augsburg Confession], and cannot understand what you mean by asking what further concessions we should make to the papists. . . . . For my part, I think we have already yielded more than enough. If they will not accept our Confession, I do not see how I can possibly yield anything more, unless they bring forward better arguments and clearer and more convincing Scripture passages [comp. p. 55] than I have seen up to now.

I ponder this business night and day, looking at it from all sides and searching the Scriptures through,

and the longer I contemplate it the more joyous grows my assurance that our doctrine is the truth, and the firmer my resolve, if God will, not to yield another inch, come what may.

I am displeased at your saying in your letter that you have followed my "authority" in this affair. I refuse to be or to be regarded as your "authority" in this affair. Even if your words may be understood in a less objectionable sense, I flatly disavow the term. If it is not your own affair just as much as mine, I will not have it called mine and yet laid upon your shoulders. If it is mine alone, then I will also bear it myself!

I tried to comfort you in my former letter, and hope its contents have brought you not death but new life. What more can I do? You are torturing yourself over the outcome of this matter, because you cannot comprehend it. Ah, but if you could comprehend it, I should not want to have anything to do with it, much less stand as its "authority." God has put it in a "commonplace"† that is beyond you with all your rhetoric and philosophy. It is called "faith", where all "things not seen" [Heb. 11:1] are found. Whoever attempts, like you, to see and comprehend these unseen things will reap tears and tribulation, as you are now doing. The Lord has said that He would dwell in darkness [1 Kings 8:12]; He made darkness His hiding place and

†A jocular allusion to Melanchthon's great work, the first Protestant dogmatic, which he called *Loci communes,* "The Commonplaces" (1521).

pavilion [Ps. 18:11]. Whoever will not have it so, let him change it! Had Moses presumed to understand how Israel could elude Pharaoh's army, they would be in Egypt still.

May God increase your faith and ours. If we have faith, what can Satan and the whole world do to us? And if we have no faith of our own, why should we not comfort ourselves with the faith of others? For even if we do not believe, there must be those who do. Otherwise there would no longer be a Church upon earth, and Christ must have ceased to be with us even before the end of the world [Matt. 28:20]. For if He be not with *us,* tell me where in all the world He is. If *we* are not the Church, or at least a part of it, where then is the Church? The Dukes of Bavaria, King Ferdinand, the Pope, the Turk—are they perhaps the Church? If *we* have not the Word of God, pray who has it?

If, then, God be for us, who can be against us [Rom. 8:31]? Though we are ungrateful sinners, that does not make Him out a liar. But in this sacred and divine cause we cannot be sinners, however much we may err in other things.

But you do not listen to what one tells you, so utterly has Satan weakened and depressed you. May Christ make you whole! That is my fervent unceasing prayer

(4) *To Lazarus Spengler*
(July 8, 1530)

[Prince John Frederick was having a seal ring made at Nuremberg for Luther, with the well-known coat of arms

upon it, the meaning of which Luther describes in the following letter to his friend, the town-clerk at Nuremberg and a writer of hymns (e. g., *Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt*).]

Grace and peace in Christ!

Honored dear sir and friend,—Since you wish to know whether they have got my seal right, I will tell you how I originally planned my coat of arms, as a symbolic representation of my theology.

The first thing is a cross black, on a heart retaining its natural color, to remind me that it is faith in the Crucified that saves us. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" [Rom. 10:10]. And though it be a black cross, mortifying the flesh and purposely inflicting pain, it does not change the color of the heart nor destroy our nature; it does not kill, but rather preserves life. For the just shall live by faith [Rom. 1:17], namely by faith in the Crucified.

This heart should be set in the midst of a white rose, to show that faith yields joy and peace and comfort, such as the world cannot give. That is why the rose is white and not red; for white is the color of spirits and all angels.

This rose is placed on a field of heavenly blue, because such spiritual joy and faith are a beginning of the future joys of heaven, which we enjoy even now by hope, though they are not yet manifest to the outward eye. And, encircling this field is a ring of gold, to signify that this bliss of heaven endures forever and ever [the ring is a symbol of eternity], and is more

precious than all other pleasures and possessions, even as gold is the most precious of all metals.

May Christ, our blessed Lord, be with your spirit till it attain to that life: Amen.

From the Wilderness of Coburg [he whimsically reverses the letters and writes it *Gruboc*], July 8, 1530.

XXV

Aesop's Fables

(1530)

[Luther was as fond as Lincoln of a good story. He greatly admired the parables of our Lord, and after them was drawn to Aesop's fables. Their homely and trenchant wisdom appealed to him as a part of the German folklore that always held a deep interest for him (he made, for instance, a collection of German proverbs and phrases), and the study of which helped to make him the great master of popular language. He made a little collection of these fables, turning them into "a somewhat better German," and found a much needed recreation touching them up during those trying days at Coburg. The very next morning after his arrival he wrote to Melanchthon: "We shall make three tabernacles on this mount—one for the Psalter, one for the prophets, and one for Aesop."—The following is part of the preface Luther wrote for the collection (containing only thirteen of the fables), which was not published until after his death, namely in 1557.—See Rich. Neubauer: *Martin Luther,* ii, 104ff.]

This collection of fables was held in high esteem by the most learned men on earth, especially among the heathen. And, to tell the truth, I know of few books even to-day, apart from the Holy Scriptures, that better portray the external life of man, if one has regard to practical knowledge and wisdom rather than to highsounding words. For under the rude words of these simple tales one may find admirable doctrine, admonition and instruction, showing how the members of a family ought to behave themselves one toward the other, and how sovereigns and subjects ought to

treat one another, that we may live wisely and at peace in this wicked world.

It is a myth, I take it, that Aesop is the author of this book; very likely there was never on earth a man by that name. I rather imagine it was composed piecemeal by divers men of wisdom, and finally brought together in its present form by some scholar or other.

Those who invented the name and figure of Aesop doubtless had good reasons for so doing. They were men of wisdom and desired to make this book common property and profitable to all. It is well known how intensely children and youths are interested in fables and fairy tales, and how easily they are drawn by means of them to wisdom and knowledge. This is all the more true when this wisdom is depicted as issuing from the mouth of Aesop or some other harlequin; they become instantly all attention, they read or hear the tales read with amusement, and thus impress them on their minds.

But these fables are not intended for children only. There is no better way of deceiving great lords and princes to their own profit than by their court-fools' telling them the truth. Though they would never suffer it from a wise man, they will gladly listen to it from their fools. Nay, all the world hates the truth when it hits home.

So, these wise men of old composed fables in which they set animals talking to one another. It is as though they had said: "Very well; since no one is willing to hear the truth, and yet all need to hear

it, let us disguise the truth and clothe it in the color of cunningly devised lies and pleasant fables. If they will not give ear to it when men speak it, well then, let them hear it out of the mouth of beasts and animals." Hence, in the fables, one animal tells the truth to another animal, and it sometimes comes to pass that the fictitious wolf or lion in the book reads the actual, two-legged wolf or lion a wholesome lecture, such as neither pastor, friend nor foe would dare to do. Or, when the fables are being read out loud, the imaginary fox will sometimes administer to a human fox across the table such a lesson as will make him squirm in his seat and feel like stabbing or burning poor Aesop alive.

These are some of the reasons why we have undertaken to revise this book and put it into somewhat better German. Especially were we concerned that our young folk should learn and remember these admirable lessons, which they will do the more readily in the pleasant guise of fables, as it were in a pantomime or puppet-show. We know what an improper book the German publishers have made of Aesop. They deserve to be severely punished; for they have not only spoiled a good and useful book, and added many things of their own (this could have been borne), but they included in it many impure and indecent stories, which are an offence to any pure-minded man and which no young person can read or hear without taking harm.

We therefore pray all pious souls to destroy that old German Aesop and to use this one instead. Much pleasure and not a little profit may be got, at table after the evening meal, by reading aloud one or more of these fables and driving home the moral to children and servants.

XXVI

The Complaint of the Birds
(1534?)

[Wolfgang Sieberger, or Wolf as he was called for short, had come to Wittenberg to study theology, but being a little weakminded he was before long graduated to the position of janitor at the Black Cloister and later became the servant-in-chief of the Luther family. He was a faithful fellow and despite his lameness a good worker, and worshiped his master. Luther was very fond of him and bought him a little plot of ground near the Black Cloister. Here Wolf set up as a fowler with "cruel birdnets and most wicked plots." He was not very successful, and Luther often laughed at him, though underneath his mirth he disapproved of anything like cruelty to the carefree birds. Probably in the autumn of 1534, he sent him the following playful letter, which must have set poor Wolf scratching his poll in surprise. "With the charming humor of the composition is mingled that love of nature and wild things that always found expression when not crowded out by more urgent matters."—The faithful Wolf survived his master by only a year.—Comp. chap. xix.]

Complaint of the Birds to Luther against his Servant Wolfgang Sieberger

To our good and kind Dr. Martin Luther, preacher at Wittenberg:

We thrushes, blackbirds, finches, linnets and goldfinches, with other pious and honest fowl, who shall touch at Wittenberg on our winter-journey, give you to know that we have it on good authority that one Wolfgang Sieberger, your servant, has conceived a wicked and dastardly plot against us. He has bought, at an exorbitant price, some worthless old birdnets

with which to set up a fowling-ground for finches, out of the great anger and hatred he harbors toward us; whereby he intends to deprive not only our dear friends the finches but all of us as well, of our God-given liberty of flying through the air and picking up grains of corn on the earth, and to endanger our life and limb, though we have never done him any harm nor deserved such cruel treatment at his hands.

All this is, as you may well imagine, a sore trouble and danger to us poor defenceless birds, who have neither barns nor houses, nor anything therein; and so we humbly and kindly petition you to prevent him carrying out his wicked design, or if this be impossible, at least to compel him to scatter corn for us on the evening before we arrive, and forbid him getting up before eight next morning and going out to his fowling-ground. In that case, we will pursue our journey by way of Wittenberg. But if he refuses and in his wickedness insists on seeking our lives, we shall pray God to restrain him, and by day to fill his nets with frogs, locusts and snails instead of birds, and at night to send mice, fleas, lice and bugs crawling over him, so that he may forget about us and not hinder us in our flight.

Why doesn't he vent his wrath and industry upon the sparrows, swallows, magpies, crows, ravens, mice and rats? These do you much harm, with stealing and robbing, and even carrying off corn, oats, malt and barley out of the house; which we never do, but merely pick up the crumbs, with here and there a stray grain

of wheat. We leave it to your fair judgment, whether he is not wrongfully persecuting us. However, we hope to God that, since so many of our brethren and friends have safely eluded him this autumn, we too shall escape his loose and broken old nets, which we examined yesterday.†

Given in our celestial mansion amid the trees, under our customary seal and quills.

> "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"
> Matt. 6:26.

†Luther was particularly amused when Wolf, after a number of birds had entered his fowling-net, would, in hope of catching more, keep the net open so long that the birds already caught escaped.

XXVII

The Latest News from the Rhine

(1542)

[This is a piece of Luther's most delicious fooling and most biting satire. It was published anonymously at Halle, but as he wrote to a good friend, "Anyone who reads it and is familiar with my style must say, 'That's Luther.'" The Archbishop of Mayence was that same Albrecht to whom Luther had sent a copy of the *Theses,* and with whom he had a spicy correspondence from the Wartburg.† The tone of the little lampoon, as contrasted with that of the *Theses,* suggests how far the cause of Luther had meanwhile progressed. Such "flying leaves," or broadsides, took in those days the place of the modern newspaper; this one was in effect an "Extra". The satire stung, and Luther was threatened with dire punishment by the furious archbishop and his friends; but he only laughed.]

Notice has been given from all the pulpits along the Rhine, in the See of Mayence, that the Archbishop, for obvious reasons and under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, has transferred all the relics, blessed and sealed with mighty Roman pardons, graces and privileges, which his Grace formerly kept at Halle in Saxony, to St. Martin's church at Mayence. Here they are to be exposed with great solemnity once a year, on the Sunday next after St. Bartholomew's Day,‡ with the announcement of the nature and blessed prop-

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†Comp. also above, p. 113, note.

‡August 24.—So far the "news" was true.—The "obvious reasons" were that the Reformation had made such progress in Saxony that Halle had become an incongruous shrine for the Archbishop's relics as well as an uncomfortable residence for their owner. Hence the removal.

erty of each relic and of much forgiveness for manifold sins. This is done in order that the beloved sons of the Rhineland may be moved to clothe the poor naked bones with new garments. The coats† they wore at Halle are in tatters, and if they had stayed there much longer they must have frozen to death.

There is also a well founded rumor that his Grace has added to the lot a number of new and notable relics, never before heard of, for which a special and great indulgence has been obtained from the Most Holy Father, Pope Paul III, to wit:—

1. A fine piece of Moses' left horn.
2. Three flames from the burning bush on Mt. Horeb.
3. Two feathers and an egg of the Holy Ghost.
4. One whole corner of the banner with which Christ harrowed hell.
5. A large wisp of Beelzebub's beard, which clung to said banner.
6. Half a wing of St. Gabriel the Archangel.
7. A full pound of the strong wind that rushed past Elijah in the cave on Mt. Horeb.
8. Two yards of the noise of the trumpet on Mt. Sinai.
9. Thirty thumpings of the timbrel of Miriam, the sister of Moses, heard by the Red Sea.

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†Cloths of costly material, in which the relics were wrapped.

10. A huge chunk of the shout with which the children of Israel threw down the walls of Jericho.

11. Five fine clear strings of David's harp.

12. Three well-preserved locks of Absalom's hair by which he was caught in the oak.—This last, of course, is shown not really as a relic but more as a curiosity, like Judas' halter in St. Peter's at Rome.

A special good friend has told me confidentially that his Grace intends in his last will and testament to make over to this collection a whole dram of his faithful and pious heart and half an ounce of his veracious tongue. For these an indulgence has already been secured from the Most Holy Father, so that whoever venerates these relics to the tune of one *gulden* shall have all his past sins forgiven up to date, as well as all the sins he can commit or feels like committing for a period of ten years to come; none of them shall affect his salvation.

This is indeed a great and rich grace, never before heard of, and should prove a source of much rejoicing to many.

XXVIII

Last Letters to Frau Käthe

(February, 1546)

[The last act in Luther's life was characteristic of him. It was a patriotic duty he undertook when, infirm and broken in health, he journeyed in midwinter to Eisleben, to arbitrate a quarrel of long standing between the Counts Mansfeld (see chap. xxi). His three sons accompanied him. His good wife was not the only one who was indignant at his being dragged, in his present state of health and at that season of the year, into a foolish squabble of princes. She was greatly concerned about her husband's health, and the outcome showed how well founded her fears were. But Luther, who kept in constant touch with her, chaffed her about her anxiety with what seems like a forced cheerfulness overlaying an untroubled faith and love, and bade her pray and trust in God. These last letters are precious documents, and show that he remained to the last the old Luther and Katie's "old lover".]

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1. (*February* 1, 1546)

I wish you grace and peace in Christ, and send you my poor, old, infirm love. I had a fainting spell, dear Katie, just before we got to Eisleben. It was my own fault, but if you had been here you would have blamed it on the Jews or on their God. For we had to pass through a village hard by Eisleben, where there are a good many Jews; besides, there are at present fifty Jews living in the city of Eisleben. Perhaps it was these Jews that sent so strong a wind against me. For as we came past the village, sure enough, a cold blast came in at the rear of the wagon and beat upon

my head through my cap, that it was like to turn my brain to ice. This may have helped to bring on my vertigo. But now, thank God, I feel right fit again. When I have finished my chief business here, I must set to work cleaning out the Jews!

I have Neunburger beer to drink, of the selfsame brew you once praised so highly at Mansfeld.

Your sons left for Mansfeld day before yesterday [to visit their uncle Jacob Luther; see 4], having been most humbly requested to do so by Hans of Jena.† I don't know what they are doing there. If it were cold, they could lend a hand at shivering; but as it is warm at present, they may be doing something else, or suffering it, as they please. God bless you, with the whole household. Give my regards to all my table companions [comp. xxiv, 1].

Your old lover,
M. L.

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2. (*February* 7, 1546)

To my dear wife Katherine Luther, doctoress and self-appointed martyr at Wittenberg, my gracious lady.

Grace and peace in the Lord! Read, I pray you, dear Katie, the Gospel of St. John and the Small Catechism, of which latter book you once said everything in it referred to you. You must, forsooth, relieve God of all care and take it upon yourself, just as if

†See Smith: *Life and Letters of Martin Luther,* p. 419, note 1.

He was not almighty and could not create a dozen Dr. Martins if the old one were to suffocate in the Saale, or down the drain-pipe, or on Wolf's fowling-ground [see chap. xxvi].

Leave me in peace with your cares! I have One who cares for me better far than you and all the angels. He lies in a manger and hangs upon a virgin's breast, but sits also on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Therefore be of good cheer. Amen.

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3. (*February* 10, 1546)

To the saintly and anxious Mistress Katherine Luther, doctoress, owner of Zulsdorf, Wittenberg, my gracious dear wife.

Grace and peace in Christ! Most holy lady doctoress! Many thanks for your great anxiety that keeps you awake o' nights. Since you began to worry about us, we were almost burnt to death in a fire at our inn, just outside my chamber door. And yesterday, due no doubt to your anxiety, a great stone came near dropping on my head and crushing me like a mouse in a trap. . . . Its purpose was to requite you for your holy care, but fortunately the dear angels protected me. I fear, if you do not stop worrying, the earth will swallow us up and all the elements pursue us. Is it thus you learn the Catechism and the Creed? Pray, and let God do the worrying! For it is said in Psalm

55:22 and in many other places: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

Thank God, we are well and hearty, except that we are growing intensely tired of this whole business. Dr. Jonas must needs have a sore leg, so he goes and knocks it against a chest. Great is the envy of man; he just couldn't bear to see me the sole possessor of a lame leg.

Herewith good-bye. We shall soon be ready, please God, to quit this place and journey homewards. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Your Holiness' obedient servant,
MARTINUS LUTHER.

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4. (*February* 14, 1546)

[The last letter Luther ever wrote.]

To my dear, kind wife, Katherine von Bora Luther, Wittenberg.

Grace and peace in the Lord! Dear Katie, we hope, God willing, to return home this week. God has richly manifested His grace toward us here; for the lords, through their councillors, have become reconciled in all but two or three points, one of which is that the two brethren, Counts Albert and Gebhard, should again become brethren indeed. This I am going to take up with them to-day, inviting them to be my guests at dinner, so that they will be thrown into conversation with each other; for until

now they have not spoken, but only embittered each other with letters.

As for the rest, the young gentlemen are having a merry time, riding out together on sledges in cap and bells, and the young ladies also, getting up masquerades [it was the carnival season just before Lent]; all jolly and in high spirits, including Count Gebhard's son. So we can see that God heareth prayer.

I am sending some trout given me by Countess Albert. She is overjoyed at the reconciliation. Your boys are still at Mansfeld [see 1], where they will be well taken care of by Jacob Luther. We eat and drink like lords here, and they wait on us so royally they almost make us forget you at Wittenberg. Also, I am not troubled any more with the stone [one of Luther's many ailments]. Dr. Jonas's leg, however, has become right bad [see 3] . . . . .but God will help him, too. You may show all of this to Magister Philip [Melanchthon], Dr. Pommer [Bugenhagen; see chap. xix] and Dr. Cruciger [professor at Wittenberg since 1528; a witness with the two others mentioned here, to Luther's last will and testament, 1542; Hans Luther married his daughter Elizabeth in 1553].

A report has reached here from Leipzig and Madgeburg, that Dr. Martin Luther has been carried off [by the devil?]; that is the kind of thing your newsmongering countrymen are turning out. Some say the Emperor is within thirty miles of here, at Soest in Westphalia; some, that the French are raising troops,

and that the Landgrave [Philip of Hesse†] is doing the same. But let them say and sing on: we will wait and see what God will do. Good-bye.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER.

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†The most consummate politician among the Protestant princes, who became the by no means innocent occasion of the one grave fault in Luther's career—his "confessional counsel" sanctioning the landgrave's bigamy.—See Boehmer: *Luther in Light of Recent Research,* p. 227-42.—It was this same prince who, in 1529, brought together the leaders of the Lutheran and Zwinglian parties in conference at Marburg, where it was no less the politics than the theology involved that prompted Luther to say to Zwingli: "You have a different spirit."

XXIX

The Last Words of All

(February 18, 1546)

[Luther's death occurred at Eisleben, his birthplace, about 2 o'clock on the morning of February 18, in his lodgings at the house of the town-clerk, John Albrecht; the immediate cause of death was a stroke of apoplexy. The day before, he had signed the treaty drawn up between the Counts Manfeld, thus completing his work as peacemaker between the princely brothers. With him when he died were his two sons Martin and Paul (where Hans was, we do not know), two servants, Dr. Jonas, Aurifaber, the Mansfeld court-preacher Michael Cölius, Count and Countess Albert, and the physicians.—See Strieder: *Authentische Berichte über Luthers letzte Lebensstunden.*]

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(1) *The Last Spoken Words*

Dr. Jonas, Cölius and you others, pray for our Lord God and His Gospel, that it may prosper, for the Council of Trent and the wretched pope are wroth with it.

O Lord God, what pain I suffer! Dear Jonas, I fear I shall remain here at Eisleben, where I was born and baptised.

O my heavenly Father, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Thou God of all comfort: I thank Thee that Thou hast revealed to me Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, in whom I believe, whom I have proclaimed and confessed, whom I have loved and praised, and whom the wretched pope and all the ungodly dishonor, persecute and blaspheme.

To Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, I commend my poor soul [*Seelchen*]. O heavenly Father, though I must quit this body and be snatched out of this life, yet am I confident that I shall be forever with Thee, and that no one can pluck me out of Thy hands.

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life [John 3:16; he said this three times, in Latin].

Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit: Thou has redeemed me, O Lord, God of Truth [Ps. 31:5; this also three times. As he was fast losing consciousness, Jonas and Cölius asked him in a loud voice, "Reverend father, do you still abide by Christ and the doctrine you have preached?" to which he replied with a loud and distinct:] "Yes".

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(2) *The Last Written Words*

(February 16, 1546)

[These were found on his writing table, after his death,—a little private meditation written in Latin. So he loved the classics, and above all the Word of God, to the end.]

No one can understand Vergil's Bucolics [poems of the pastoral life] unless he has spent five years as a shepherd.

No one can understand Vergil's Georgics [poems of the agricultural life] unless he has spent five years as a tiller of the soil.

No one can fully understand Cicero's Letters unless he has spent twenty-five years in the public affairs of the state.

Let no one imagine he has sufficiently tasted the Holy Scriptures unless he has spent a hundred years ruling the churches with prophets like Elijah and Elishah, John Baptist, Christ, and the Apostles.

Lay not thy hand on this divine Aeneid, but humbly adore the footsteps of God [a reminiscence from the *Thebais,* a Latin epic by Statius, a Roman poet of the first century].

We are beggars. That is the truth.

February 16, A. D. 1546.

APPENDIX I

Chronological Survey of Luther's Life and Work

1483	November 10, born at Eisleben; parents, Hans Luther (miner) and Margaret, nee Ziegler. November 11, baptised in SS. Peter and Paul's church, and named Martin after the saint whose day it was.
1484–97	At Mansfeld, whither the family had moved.
1497–98	At the school of the Brethren of the Common Life, in Madgeburg.
1498–01	At St. George's school, Eisenach; the singing scholar is received by Lady Ursula Cotta into her cultured home.
1501	About May, matriculated at University of Erfurt.
1502	Takes degree of Bachelor of Arts.
1505	Master of Arts.
1505	July 12, suddenly enters Augustinian monastery at Erfurt, to the disgust of his father.
1507	Spring, ordained to priesthood; May 2, reads his first mass.
1508	About November, called to teach Aristotle's ethics and logic at University of Wittenberg (founded 1502).
1509	March 9, Bachelor of Theology.
1509	Autumn, called back to Erfurt to teach dogmatics.
1510–11	Journey to Rome in the interest of his order; December spent in holy city.
1511	Summer, returns to Wittenberg; lectures on Bible.
1512	October 18, Doctor of Theology.
1515	May, elected District-vicar of Augustinian order. Called by City Council as associate pastor of City-church.
1516	Edits and publishes the mystical *German Theology* (comp. chap. ii, introduction).
1517	October 31, posts the *XCV Theses,* against the abuse of indulgences, on door of Castle-church at Wittenberg (chap. iii).
1518	Interview with Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg.
1519	Interview with the papal nuncio Miltitz at Altenburg.

1519 July 4-14, debate with John Eck at Leipzig.

1520 June 15, Leo X signs the bull *Exsurge Domine,* threatening Luther with excommunication unless he recants within 60 days.

1520 August, Luther publishes *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (chap. v).

October, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (chap. vi).

November, *The Liberty of a Christian Man* (chap. vii).

December 10, Luther burns the papal bull and formally breaks with Rome (chap. viii).

1521 January 3, Luther is formally excommunicated and put under the ban.

1521 April 17, 18, Luther appears before the Diet of Worms (chap. ix).

May 4-March 1, 1522, at the Wartburg, disguised as *Squire George.* Writes *On Monastic Vows,* completes *Magnificat,* works on *Church Postil,* and translates *New Testament* (chaps. x and xii).

1522 Invocavit to Reminiscere, preaches remarkable series of sermons, allaying the Wittenberg revolution of Carlstadt and others (chap. xiv).

September, publication of *The New Testament in German* (chap. x).

1523–6 Publishes *Of Secular Government* (chap. xv), and a group of writings looking to the reform of the organization and worship of the Church (chaps. xvi-xviii).

1524 Writes on *Christian Schools* (chap. xx).

Lays off his Augustinian monk's habit.

1525 Writes against the Peasants' Uprising (comp. chap. xxi).

June 13, marries Katherine von Bora (born, Jan. 29, 1499; entered Cistercian cloister at Nimbsch, 1508 or 1509; took the veil, 1515, left the cloister, April 4-5, 1523) (chaps. xxi and xxviii).

Writes *On the Bound Will,* against Erasmus.

1526 June 7, Hans Luther born (see chaps. xix and and xxiv, 2).

1527 July, severe illness of Luther.

December 10, Elizabeth Luther born.

1527–8 Visitation of churches and schools in Saxony.

1528 August 3, Elizabeth Luther dies.
Ein Feste Burg (first published; probably composed as early as 1521) (comp. chap. xix).

1529 *Small* and *Large Catechisms* (chap. xxii).
May 3, Magdalena Luther born.
October 2, conference with Zwingli and others, at Marburg.

1530 April 23-October 4, at Castle Coburg, during Diet of Augsburg (chaps. xii, xxiv and xxv).
May 29, Luther's father dies (chap. xxiii).

1531 June 30, Luther's mother dies.
November 9, Martin Luther, Jr. born.

1532 February 4, the Black Cloister is deeded to Luther and his heirs.

1533 January 28, Paul Luther born.

1534 Publication of *Complete German Bible* (chaps. xi and xii).
December 17, Margaret Luther born.

1535 November 7, the papal legate at Wittenberg, in conference with Luther concerning a free council.

1536 January to April, conferences between the Wittenberg theologians and an English delegation sent by Henry VIII.
May 29, The Wittenberg Concord signed by Luther and Swiss theologians.

1537 February, Luther goes to congress of Schmalkalden; serious illness.
February 27, makes his first will.

1538 *The Schmalkald Articles* published (comp. chap. xxii, introduction).

1539 May, Luther goes to Leipzig to introduce Reformation into Albertine Saxony.
December 10, Luther signs the "confessional counsel", permitting Philip of Hesse to take a second wife.
Writes preface to his *German Works* (chap. i, 1).

1540 January and February, Katherine Luther very ill.
June, Luther prays Melanchthon back to life (comp. chap. iv, introduction).

1542 January 6, Luther's second will (comp. p. 146).
September 20, Magdalena Luther dies (comp. chap. xix).

1545 Last revised edition of German Bible during Luther's life (comp. chap. xi, introduction).
Writes preface to his *Complete Works* (chap. i, 2).
Last lecture at University, completing his "dear Genesis."

1546 February 18, Luther dies at Eisleben; February 22, buried under chancel of Castle-church in Wittenberg (chap. xxix).

1552 December 2, Katherine Luther dies.

APPENDIX II

Reading and Reference List

[There is, of course, no attempt to be exhaustive. Only such works as bear more or less directly on the contents of this volume, and only some of these, are included. Luther's own works are listed somewhat more fully, for the sake of reference. It is suggested that members of study classes using the *Primer* see that certain of these books are found in a near-by library, where they can be consulted by the class. The individual reader will find among these titles a number he may like to add to his own library.]

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